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ABSTRACT

This monograph, part of a series on student assessment, reports on the results of a national survey that examined institutional support for undergraduate student assessment. The study provides a national profile of student assessment initiatives at associate of arts institutions and compares it to assessment practices and support patterns found in all types of postsecondary institutions. It also offers advice for administrators, faculty, and staff in associate of arts institutions who are designing student assessment approaches and support processes that are likely to foster institutional improvement. Also included is the survey instrument used to gather study data, which institutions can use to examine patterns for student assessment on their own campuses. The monograph is organized in nine sections; they are: (1) "Introduction and Overview," (2) "Perspectives on Student Assessment in Higher Education," (3) "The Influence of External Groups," (4) "Approaches to Student Assessment," (5) "Organizational and Administrative Support Patterns," (6) "Assessment Management Practices and Policies," (7) "Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment," (8) "Key Relationships," and (9) "Executive Summary: Research Results and Recommendations." Appended is the survey instrument, the "Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Associate of Arts

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Designing Student Assessment to Strengthen Institutional Performance in Associate of Arts Institutions

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This monograph reports the results of a national research survey that examines institutional support for undergraduate student assessment. It provides a national profile of student assessment initiatives at associate of arts institutions; useful advice for administrators, faculty, and staff who are designing student assessment approaches and support processes that are likely to foster institutional improvement; and an instrument that institutions can use to examine patterns for student assessment on their own campuses.

This report is a result of the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI) research program examining organizational and administrative support for student assessment. In 1997-98, NCPI researchers conducted a major literature review followed by a national survey on institutional support for student assessment. While other dissemination efforts have focused on a research audience, this report is specifically written for administrators, faculty, and staff in associate of arts institutions who are involved with student assessment on their campuses.

Purpose of the Monograph

Administrators and faculty leaders have little credible and verifiable evidence to guide their planning and decision-making regarding student assessment. The literature on student assessment offers many descriptions of student assessment practices at a variety of postsecondary institutions (Banta & Associates, 1993; Banta, Lund, Black, & Oblander, 1996) and a number of limited surveys have collected information concerning student assessment measures and methods used by focused groups of institutions (Cowart, 1990; El-Khawas, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996; Johnson, Prus, Andersen, & El-Khawas, 1991). There has been comparatively less consideration of how colleges and universities can develop an effective institutional strategy for assessment or of organizational and administrative practices that support internal engagement in assessment and enhance the use of student assessment data. Guidelines for planning and implementing student assessment efforts are available (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], 1992; Ewell, 1988a, 1988b; Rossman & El-Khawas, 1987) but largely missing is any systematic examination of the relationships among various ways institutions have approached and supported student assessment and the likelihood of their reaping positive impacts from student assessment efforts (Banta et al., 1996; Ewell, 1988b; Gray & Banta, 1997). Furthermore, there has been little research focused specifically on student assessment within associate of arts institutions.

Understanding the national profile of undergraduate assessment activities and support patterns found in associate of arts institutions is important for several reasons. First, it is helpful for institutions to know what their peers are doing in relation to student assessment. How are other institutions responding to external demands for student assessment? What approaches to student assessment are they using? How are they supporting and promoting student assessment through their practices and policies? How are they using student assessment data? What impacts has student assessment had on faculty as well as institutional and student performance? Finally, if student assessment activities do make a difference in terms of improved teaching and learning on campuses, how does that happen? What external influences, institutional approaches, and organizational and administrative support practices encourage internal involvement in student assessment and positive impacts from student assessment data?

This monograph will answer these questions through three primary objectives. First, it will provide a national profile of current student assessment practices and institutional support patterns within associate of arts institutions and compare this to assessment practices and support patterns found in all types of postsecondary institutions. A second major objective is to provide

advice for administrators, faculty, and staff in associate of arts institutions on designing student assessment approaches and support processes that are likely to foster institutional improvement. Finally, this report includes the survey instrument used to gather data for this study in Appendix A. Institutions can use this inventory to examine student assessment patterns on their own campuses.

We will discuss the student assessment methods used by institutions in this report, but it is not our intent to examine the specific instruments used or the measurement issues associated with their use. For a detailed literature review on student assessment, please consult Improving Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment: A Review of the Research Literature (Peterson, Einarson, Trice, & Nichols, 1997). The data from our survey research have been summarized in several forms including numerous conference papers and journal articles, and a technical report entitled Institutional Support for Student Assessment: Methodology and Results of a National Survey (Peterson, Einarson, Augustine, & Vaughan, 1999). Readers who are interested in the statistical analyses conducted on the student assessment data should consult the technical report. While this report relies on those statistical analyses, it will not provide statistical details.

Definition of Student Assessment

Our focus in this report is on undergraduate student assessment from an institutional perspective. We are interested in what approach institutions use to assess student performance, how institutions are organized to promote and support student assessment, and how they use student assessment to improve student, faculty, and academic performance in the institution.

In this monograph, we use the term student assessment to refer to activities other than traditional end-of-course grading that are used to measure a diverse array of dimensions of student performance or development. Institutions may decide to engage in student assessment for a variety of reasons or differing purposes. Cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of student performance and development may be assessed. Assessment efforts may be directed toward students as they enter the institution, during their enrollment, or after they exit from the institution. Student assessment may use a variety of methods and may be planned and executed centrally within institutions or in a decentralized manner through the actions of individual academic units. This report will address all these dimensions of student assessment.

Preview of the Monograph

This report is presented in nine sections. Following this introduction, the second section, perspectives on student assessment, provides a brief recent history of the student assessment movement in general and in associate of arts institutions specifically. The conceptual framework of institutional support for student assessment that was developed in the literature review (Peterson et al., 1997) and guided the development of the survey instrument is then presented. Section two ends with a brief summary of the methods used to conduct the research on institutional support for student assessment.

Sections three through seven present the results of a national survey on institutional support for student assessment. In each of these sections, information is presented for both associate of arts institutions and all institutions that responded to the study. Section three focuses on the influence of external groups, such as state agencies and accreditors, on institutional student assessment patterns. In this section, the influence of states on institutional student assessment activity is considered for public institutions only. Section four focuses on institutions' approaches to student assessment. This section is followed by a summary of the institution-wide support patterns evident in the study. Section six discusses assessment management practices and policies used by institutions to promote or assure the use of student assessment information. Section seven reports on the institutional uses and impacts of student assessment.

Section eight is based on the statistical analyses conducted on the national survey data. It presents the findings from analyses of three sets of key relationships examined in the study. The first focuses on the influence of external groups on institutional approaches to student assessment. The second examines the relationship of external influences, institutional context, assessment approaches, institution-wide support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies to the institutional uses of student assessment data. The third analysis examines the relationship of external influences, institutional context, assessment approaches, institution-wide support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies to the impacts of engaging in student assessment. Section nine presents a summary of our research findings and related recommendations for specific assessment activities within associate of arts institutions. It concludes with general guidelines for institutions to use to examine and redesign or plan their student assessment process and functions.

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2. PERSPECTIVES ON STUDENT ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

An overview of the development of student assessment in higher education and in associate of arts institutions suggests the need for the institutional perspective that guides this report. A guiding framework conceptualizes seven domains of an institution's student assessment strategy: institutional context, external influences, approach adopted, institutional support patterns, assessment management practices and policies, assessment culture and climate, and institutional uses and impacts of student assessment.

This monograph concurs with the perspective of other scholars of student assessment. We agree that, at its best, student assessment is not simply an exercise to gather data or respond to accountability requirements. Rather, an effective student assessment approach is one that gathers information about selected aspects of students' characteristics, achievements, and experiences and uses this information to shape institutional policies, processes, and practices in ways that lead to improved student performance and institutional functioning (AAHE, 1992; Banta & Associates, 1993; Ewell, 1984, 1987c, 1988b; Jacobi, Astin & Ayala, 1987).

Growth of Student Assessment

The assessment of student performance in higher and postsecondary education is not a new concept or phenomenon. The first College Board examination designed to assess student learning outcomes on a national scale was administered in 1901. The ensuing decades are marked by events that reflect a growing concern with assessing college student performance, such as: the emergence of a regional accreditation focus on student assessment; the establishment of university-based and national testing centers; and the development of broadened taxonomies of student outcomes (Resnick & Goulden, 1987; Sims, 1992). However, these earlier developments pale in comparison to the emergence in the mid 1980s of student assessment as an important focus of educational policy at the national, state, and institutional level — a focus that continues today.

This heightened interest in student assessment is the result of many broad forces. In the larger societal and political arena, concerns about consumer protection, the rising costs of education, the training and human resource needs for state and regional economic development, and fiscal pressures on state and federal government all have shaped public interest in the educational contribution of higher education institutions. At the institutional level, the challenges of expansion in the 1950s and 60s, enrollment and financial constraints in the 1970s, and new educational demands in the 1980s have shifted the managerial focus of performance by higher education institutions from resource adequacy, to efficiency, to effectiveness, to broader concerns for academic and institutional quality. Consequently, over the past decade and a half the assessment and improvement of student performance has been the focus of much of this discussion and of many efforts both external to and within colleges and universities.

A variety of specific activities at the national level — reports, guidelines, legislation, educational goals, and funding — have been credited with providing the initial stimulus for the student assessment movement in higher education in the last decade and a half. A series of national reports that critically examined the quality of education were published in the mid 1980s. The first, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), prompted calls for reform in elementary and secondary education. The following year Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education (National Institute of Education, 1984) addressed the conditions required for improving the quality of undergraduate education. Institutions were given three recommendations: set high expectations for student learning, actively involve students in learning, and develop an institutionalized process for assessing student learning. Subsequent reports such as To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the

Humanities in Higher Education (Bennett, 1984) and Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community (Association of American Colleges, 1985) continued this focus on issues of undergraduate education quality and assessment. In 1988 the U.S. Department of Education revised its Criteria for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies, stipulating that agencies must require educational institutions and programs to (1) clearly specify their educational objectives and (2) conduct student assessment to determine whether they are achieving these standards. In addition, the enactment of legislation such as the "Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act" and "Ability to Benefit" legislation (Education Commission of the States, 1991), adoption of the National Education Goals (Lenth, 1993, 1996; Nettles, 1995), and provision of federal funds for the development of institutions' assessment projects (Cook, 1989) contributed to the early momentum of the assessment movement.

State governments, reflecting these national developments, have also played a key role in stimulating postsecondary student assessment. The first state-level mandate for student assessment appeared when the Florida state legislature directed the higher education system to develop the College-Level Academic Skills Test in 1982. Since then, the number of states involved in student assessment has increased steadily with all but four of fifty states now reporting some type of student assessment initiative (Cole, Nettles, & Sharp, 1997). States have varied greatly in their approaches to student assessment policy, but there is evidence of a general shift in state-level approaches over the past decade. From the mid to late 1980s state assessment initiatives generally emphasized institutional improvement as their primary purpose and largely permitted institutions to design their own assessment efforts. Since 1990, states have placed greater emphasis on student assessment as a means of responding to external demands for accountability and have increasingly elected to mandate the content and form of institutions' assessment approaches.

Regional accreditation associations also have emerged as an important influence on student assessment. Regional accrediting associations vary in the length of time they have been involved in student assessment, their specific reporting requirements, and the range of assessment-related services provided to member institutions (Cole et al., 1997). Since the federal government revised its criteria for recognizing accrediting agencies in 1988, all six regional accreditation associations have required member institutions to undertake and document some form of student assessment activity. In turn, a growing number of institutions have reported that accreditation requirements are an important reason for deciding to engage in and increase their student assessment efforts (El-Khawas, 1995; Johnson, et. al., 1991).

Since the mid 1980s the number of postsecondary institutions engaged in some form of student assessment activity has steadily increased (El-Khawas, 1988, 1990, 1995). However, by 1990 only a small proportion of institutions have embarked on comprehensive student assessment programs (El-Khawas, 1990; Hexter & Lippincott, 1990; Johnson et al., 1991). Fewer still have reported achieving observable impacts from their student assessment efforts (Astin, 1991; Hutchings & Marchese, 1990). So it seems that many colleges and universities are investing faculty and administrative time and effort in student assessment, but few are benefiting from its potential to improve student and institutional performance.

Characteristics of Associate of Arts Institutions

Institutional type is an important dimension to consider when examining the approach an institution takes toward student assessment. To date, there has been little examination of differences in effective organizational and administrative practices for promoting student assessment within specific types of institutions. Yet, effective strategies and practices for planning, promoting, and implementing undergraduate student assessment vary according to the type of postsecondary institution being considered — for example, what works in promoting student assessment in associate of arts institutions will be different from what works in research institutions. In our national study of institutional support for student assessment, we found that

there were many statistically significant differences by institutional type on the approaches to, support for, practices and policies regarding, and uses and impacts of student assessment reported by institutions, and that they were typically stronger than differences by other institutional characteristics such as size or whether the institution is private or public.

The challenges associate of arts institutions face as they develop student assessment programs are quite different from those faced by other institutions. These differences stem, in part, from the institutional mission, curricular focus, governance structure, faculty roles and responsibilities, and the student clientele typically associated with associate of arts colleges.

The missions of associate of arts institutions are usually quite broad, encompassing such diverse goals as occupational training, general education preparation, and welfare to work transitions. The curriculum found at associate of arts institutions is also necessarily broad to meet the institutional mission. While many associate of arts institutions have broad curriculum ranging from occupational to traditional, often the traditional curriculum will aggregate specialized disciplines from the humanities and liberal arts and science areas into a general "transfer program" for those students who plan to transfer. This aggregation may make it difficult to assess students in a specific liberal arts "program" as these students are allowed to take quite a number of different courses to fulfill their program requirements.

Associate of arts institutions also often have somewhat unique governance structures. Administrators at these institutions typically wield more power than their peers at four-year institutions. Compared to faculty at other institutional types, associate of arts faculty generally have less power and autonomy (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Frye, 1994; Reyes & Twombly, 1987; Seidman, 1985). This lack of autonomy suggests that administrators may have more influence over decisions to assess students than do administrators in four-year colleges and universities. Conversely, the lack of autonomy may mean that faculty at associate of arts institutions who want to explore assessing their students will not have the freedom or the support necessary to take advantage of professional development opportunities on student assessment.

Associate of arts faculty are also different from faculty at four-year colleges and universities. Some researchers believe that because associate of arts faculty are more oriented toward teaching (Jemmott, 1992/1993), they will be more receptive to student assessment techniques that will lead to improving the teaching and learning process. Other researchers believe that associate of arts faculty may be less willing to engage in student assessment, as they typically have more limited research experience and expertise than do their four-year college peers (Palmer, 1993). These researchers stress that familiarity with conducting research is important in developing both comfort and skill in assessing students.

The characteristics of the student bodies at associate of arts institutions are also different from those at other institutions. Students may be interested in completing an associate degree program, transferring to a four-year institution, or meeting a more immediate goal such as occupational retraining. The higher percentage of part-time students at associate of arts institutions means that many are on campus for short time periods, have lower retention rates, and take longer to finish their programs. It may be difficult to involve these students in assessment activities outside of the classroom. Furthermore, Seybert (1994) cited the diversity of student background, employment status, and preparation as issues associate of arts institutions must address as they try to develop a comprehensive assessment plan.

Palmer (1993) noted that many two-year institutions collect and analyze student data, but stop short of trying to apply standards to the analysis. In these cases, the decision seems to have been made that there are simply too many student goals to take into account. Applying any kind of general standards to the outcomes would not be reflective of the varying realities. Kreider and Walleri (1988) argued that two-year colleges should focus instead on a student-success approach

that is tied to stated student intentions. It is not clear from the literature how frequently this practice is used. However, extant research shows that entry-only assessment is more common than entry and exit assessment (Alfred, Peterson, & White 1992; Cowart, 1990).

Despite the potential difficulties of assessing diverse students in associate of arts institutions, these institutions have been cited as developing quite advanced information systems for student tracking (Walleri & Seybert, 1993). These systems are sometimes developed in collaboration with other two- and four-year institutions located in the same state to allow for tracking students who transfer between and among institutions. Such systems are extremely helpful in assessing students. Although the existing literature includes references to these information systems and some broader institutional case studies of student assessment, it does not describe the current assessment activities conducted throughout the country by associate of arts institutions.

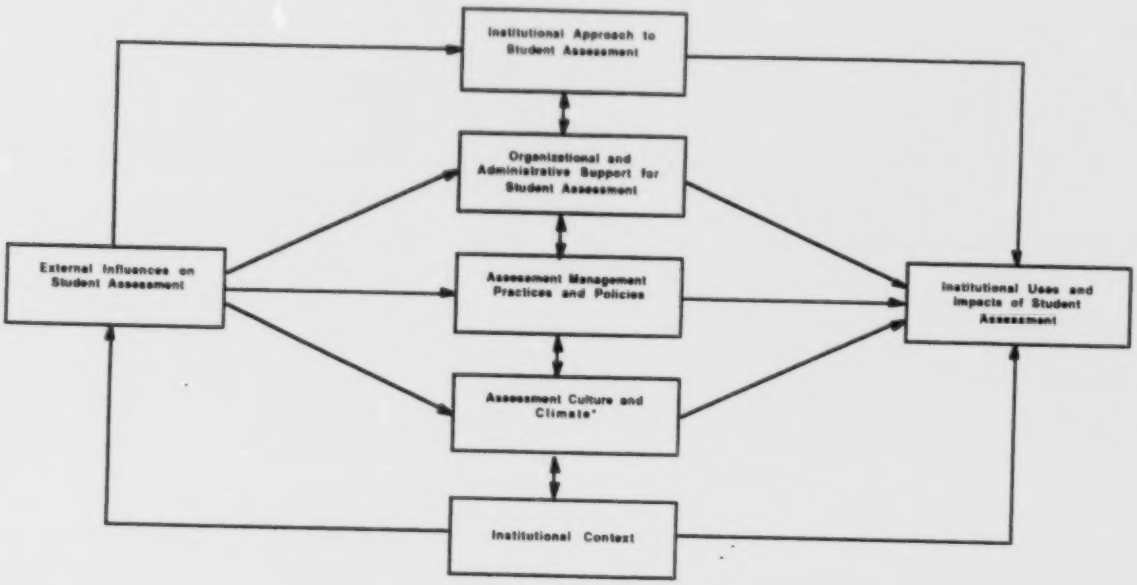
A Framework of Institutional Support for Student Assessment

An institution's organizational and administrative context can be a powerful source of influence on administrators', faculty members' and students' behaviors and perceptions, shaping their views of what the institution values and which activities are important to engage in. Colleges and universities purposefully create a variety of structures, processes, practices, and policies to support and implement student assessment. Institutions have varied greatly in their approaches to assessing student performance and the ways in which they have organized to support their assessment efforts, a finding that is hardly surprising given the great diversity and relative autonomy of colleges and universities in the American postsecondary system. Yet there is little systematic evidence available concerning the specific manner in which postsecondary institutions have organized to support student assessment and the differential results of these efforts. For these reasons, we have chosen to examine student assessment from a research-based and institutional perspective.

An extensive literature review identified what is currently known about the organizational and administrative context for student assessment in postsecondary institutions. A detailed description of the literature review process and findings is available in other publications (Peterson et al., 1999; Peterson et al., 1997). From this review, we developed a framework of institutional support for student assessment. This framework, displayed in Figure 1, consists of seven interacting domains. It conceptualizes how institutions respond to external pressures for student assessment, how they approach student assessment, the organizational and administrative patterns they use to support student assessment, what assessment practices and policies they have adopted to promote student assessment, their culture and climate for student assessment, and how student assessment information is used by and has impacts on institutions. A seventh domain, institutional context, reflects the fact that these patterns probably differ significantly by institutional type, size, and whether the institution is private or public. The culture and climate domain is not examined in this report and is the focus of future research activity. The other domains are briefly described below. A complete listing of the variables included in each domain is provided in Appendix B.

External Influences on Student Assessment. A variety of external constituencies have played an important role in initiating and shaping student assessment efforts within postsecondary institutions. In particular, state-level initiatives and regional accreditation associations may exert strong direct influences through their requirements for student assessment. The business community, private foundations, and professional higher education associations may serve as weaker sources of influence — whether as participants in institutions' assessment efforts, as consultants or sources of resource materials, or as providers of funds for assessment-related activities. National efforts appear to have largely played an indirect role in influencing institutions' assessment efforts.

Figure 1. Framework of Institutional Support for Student Assessment


Institutional Approach to Student Assessment
Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment
External Influences on Student Assessment
Assessment Management Practices and Policies
Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment
Assessment Culture and Climate*
Institutional Context

*This domain is not addressed in this study

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Institutional Approach to Student Assessment. Institutional approach to student assessment refers to institutions' decisions regarding the collection and analysis of student assessment information. Important dimensions along which student assessment approaches can be differentiated include: the type or content of student assessment measures; the extent or array of student assessment data collected; the instruments and methods used to collect student assessment data; and the analyses conducted and reported for collected data.

Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment. The literature on student assessment identifies five important dimensions of organizational or administrative behavior patterns that may support student assessment efforts and enhance the likelihood that assessment will contribute to improvements in institutional performance: the institution-wide support strategy for student assessment; institution-wide administrative and governance activities used to promote student assessment; leadership and faculty support for student assessment; planning and coordination of student assessment; and procedures used to evaluate and revise student assessment efforts.

Assessment Management Practices and Policies. Assessment management practices and policies refer to specific practices, policies, procedures, or activities intentionally devised by institutions to implement and support their student assessment efforts. A number of content activity areas of this domain have been identified including: academic resource allocation; student information systems; internal access to student information; distribution of assessment reports and studies; student involvement in assessment; professional development for student assessment; training for student affairs staff; faculty evaluation and rewards; and academic planning and review processes.

Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment. Institutions can use the information collected through student assessment processes to contribute to improvement in institutional and student performance. Three broad domains of institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information are suggested in the literature. These are the use of assessment information for institutional decision making, its impact on various internal constituents and phenomena, and its impact on the institution's relationships with its external constituents.

Institutions may use assessment information within several areas of academic decision making such as academic planning and review, academic mission and goals, resource allocation, and faculty evaluation and rewards. Student assessment information may have both internal impacts, such as stimulating faculty interest in teaching and enhancing student learning, and external impacts, such as influencing state funding or re-accreditation decisions. The primary concern of our framework is to examine the relationship of external influences, institutions' assessment approaches, patterns of organizational and administrative support for assessment, and assessment management practices and policies to institutional uses and impacts of assessment information.

Institutional Context. Broad institutional characteristics such as institutional type, size, and whether the institution is public or private are expected to moderate external influences on assessment, the institutional approach to student assessment, organizational and administrative support patterns, assessment management practices and policies, and institutional uses and impacts of assessment information.

Description of National Survey

Based on our review of the student assessment literature, we developed a survey instrument or inventory called "Institutional Support for Student Assessment" (ISSA). The instrument focuses on the assessment of undergraduate students conducted by postsecondary institutions — not individual faculty or academic sub-units within institutions. The instrument is

designed as a comprehensive inventory of external influences on institutions' student assessment efforts, institutional approaches to student assessment, organizational and administrative support patterns for student assessment, assessment management practices and policies used, and institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information. The instrument was intended to assist institutions in obtaining a clear picture of their own student assessment efforts, to provide a national profile of undergraduate student assessment efforts in postsecondary institutions, and to increase current understanding of how institutions can engage in and promote student assessment that produces positive impacts on academic, student, and institutional performance. A copy of the survey instrument is included in Appendix A.

In January 1998, the ISSA instrument was mailed to the chief academic administrator at all postsecondary institutions recognized by the U.S. Office of Education that offer undergraduate programs at the associate or baccalaureate degree level, excluding proprietary and specialized institutions. Completed surveys were received from 1,393 of the 2,524 institutions meeting these criteria for an overall response rate of 55%. Associate of arts institutions were well represented in the survey responses. We received a total of 548 surveys from associate of arts institutions — more than half of the associate of arts institutions (54%) to whom instruments were mailed chose to complete and return the survey. In addition, more than half of eligible public and private associate of arts institutions participated, and survey responses were quite evenly distributed across states and accrediting regions. Given this strong and diversified response rate, we are able to offer a representative profile of undergraduate student assessment activities undertaken in associate of arts institutions. Throughout this report we compare student assessment activities within associate of arts institutions to student assessment activities within all responding institutions, including associate of arts institutions.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL GROUPS

Examines state and regional accreditation association requirements and external sources of support for student assessment. While both states and regional accrediting agencies have influenced institutions to engage in student assessment, accrediting associations are reported to have greater influence than states on associate of arts institutions' assessment initiatives.

State officials and regional accreditation associations have increasingly required postsecondary institutions to become engaged in student assessment. Together with professional associations and private foundations, they have also offered various services to support institutions' student assessment efforts. There has been relatively little examination of institutions' perceptions of and experiences with these external groups. To examine this domain, our survey included questions concerning: state requirements for student assessment; regional accreditation association requirements for student assessment; and external sources of support for student assessment. The following sections address each of these areas in turn.

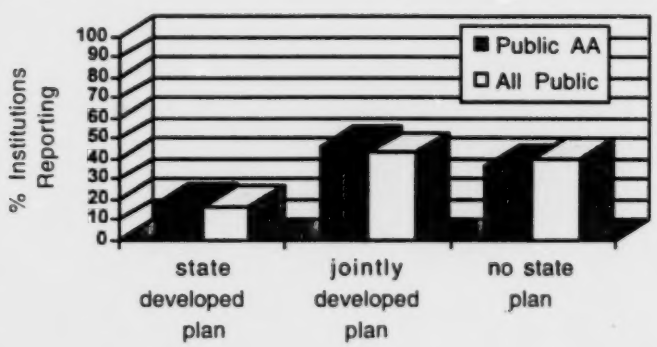
State Role in Student Assessment

States have varied widely in the development and content of their initiatives for postsecondary student assessment (Cole et al., 1997). To examine the role of state influences in some detail, the survey asked for institutions' perceptions of three dimensions of state assessment plans: the development process and reporting requirements of state assessment plans; the influence of state requirements on institutions' assessment efforts; and state review of institutions' assessment plans or processes. These questions were directed only to state-funded institutions.

Development and Reporting Requirements of State Assessment Plans

Development. Scholars have suggested that the influence of state assessment initiatives on institutions' assessment efforts may depend on whether or not institutions have had input in the development of the initiatives. Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether their state's plan for student assessment was developed primarily by state officials, through joint consultation between state officials and institutional representatives, or whether no state plan or requirement for student assessment existed. Responses from associate of arts and all institutions receiving state funding are displayed in Figure 2.

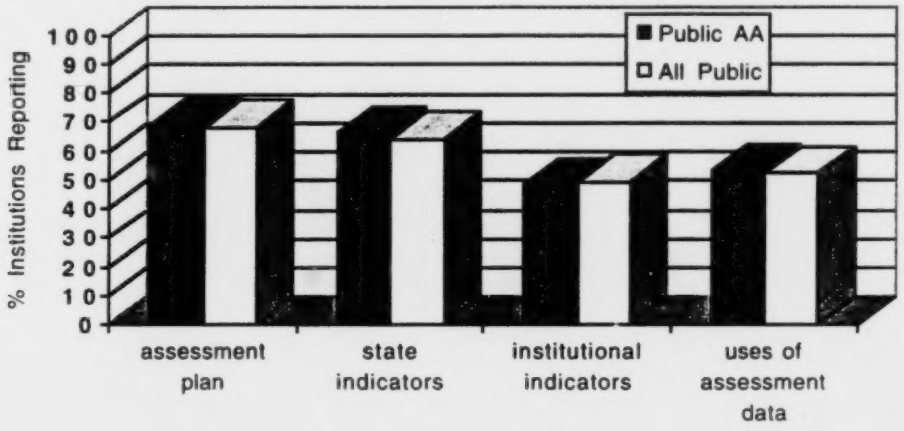
Figure 2. Development of State Plan for Student Assessment



More than a third of the public associate of arts institutions report that there is no state plan for student assessment (38%). Of the remainder who say there is a state plan, most report that it was developed jointly by both state officials and campus representatives (45%). Almost one-fifth report that the state plan for student assessment was developed solely by state officials. Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are slightly less likely to report that there is no state plan for assessment.

Reporting Requirements. Scholars also contend that the influence of state assessment initiatives will vary with the specific nature of the reporting requirements associated with these initiatives. What types of information are institutions required to report to state officials? We asked institutions with state plans for assessment which of the following types of information they are required to report as part of their state's assessment plan: evidence of a student assessment plan; measurement of state-mandated student performance indicators; measurement of institutionally-developed student performance indicators; and evidence of having used student assessment information. Institutions checked all applicable reporting requirements. Figure 3 presents these responses for public associate of arts and all public institutions in our study.

Figure 3. State Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment*



*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question.

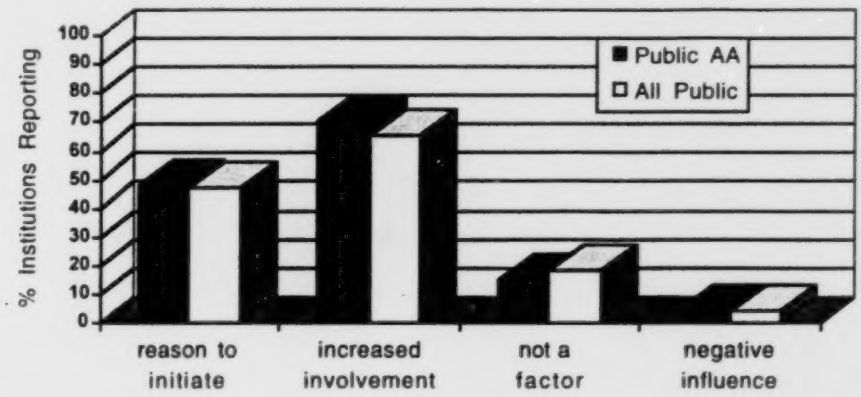
The most common reporting requirements for associate of arts institutions are evidence of a student assessment plan (69%) and measures of state-mandated student performance indicators (66%). Approximately half of respondents say they must report on institutionally-devised student performance indicators (48%) and are required to provide evidence of having used student assessment information (53%). The emphasis on evidence of an assessment plan and state-mandated student performance indicators is expected to contribute less to institutional support for student assessment than reporting requirements that emphasize evidence of assessment information use and institutionally-developed student performance indicators. There are no major differences in the state reporting requirements experienced by associate of arts institutions and all institutions.

Influence of State Assessment Requirements

What influence have state assessment requirements had on institutions' undergraduate student assessment activities? Institutions were asked which of the following impacts on their student assessment activities they attribute to state assessment requirements: were an important reason for institution initiating undergraduate student assessment; increased institution's

involvement in undergraduate student assessment; were not a factor in institution's undergraduate student assessment activities; or were a negative influence on institution's undergraduate student assessment activities. Institutions selected all applicable influences. Responses from public associate of arts and all public institutions are displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Influence of State Requirements for Student Assessment on Institutions' Assessment Activities*



*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question

Among associate of arts institutions reporting a state plan, most report that their state's assessment plan has increased their involvement in student assessment activities (69%). Many report that their state's mandate was an important reason for initiating their student assessment process (48%). Few respondents report that their state's assessment mandate is not a factor in their student assessment efforts (15%) or that it has a negative influence on their efforts (4%). Compared to all public institutions, public associate of arts institutions are more likely to report that their state's mandate has increased involvement in student assessment efforts on their campus.

State Review of Institutions' Student Assessment Plans

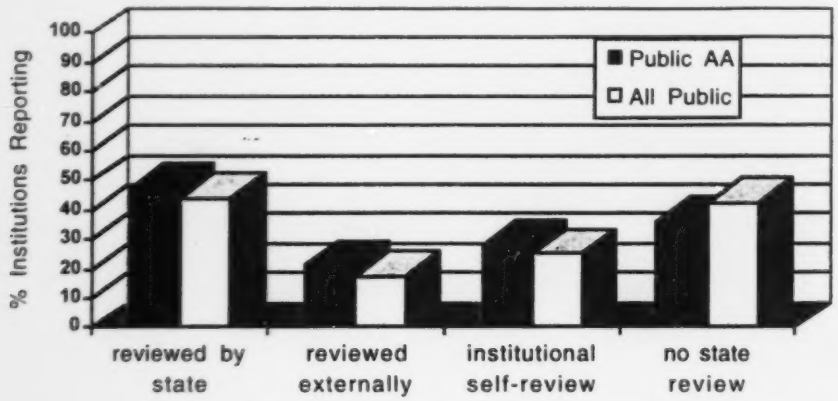
Occurrence of State Review. States vary in terms of whether and how they evaluate institutions' student assessment plans or information (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 1996). The survey asked respondents whether state officials had reviewed or evaluated their institution's student assessment plans or processes. If a state review or evaluation had occurred, respondents indicated whether this review had been conducted by state officials, external reviewers, or the institution itself. Responses from public associate of arts and all public institutions are presented in Figure 5.

Most public associate of arts institutions in states with mandated student assessment activities report that their student assessment plan or policy has been reviewed (64%). The most common form of review is by the state itself (46%). Approximately one-quarter of associate of arts institutions report that they have been required to do a self-review and the least common method for reviewing the institution's student assessment policy or plan is by external reviewers (20%). Public associate of arts institutions are more likely to report that they have had a state review of their student assessment plan or policy than are all public institutions in our study.

State Review Criteria. Institutions that have undergone a state review of their student assessment plan or process specified if the evaluation: reviewed the institution's student

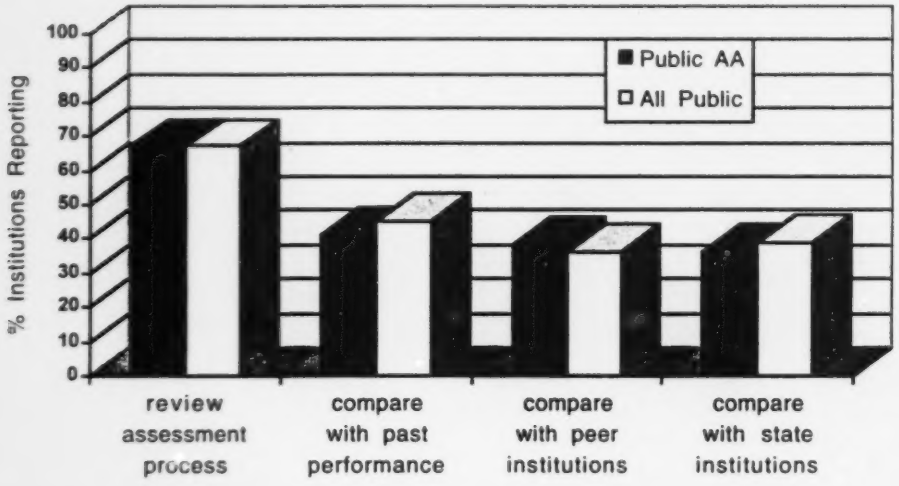
assessment process; compared the institution's student performance record to its past performance; compared the institution's student performance record with that of peer institutions; or compared the institution's student performance record with that of other institutions in the state. Responses from public associate of arts and all public institutions are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 5. Methods Used to Review Institutions' Student Assessment Plans or Processes*



*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question

Figure 6. State Review Criteria for Institutions' Student Assessment Plans or Processes*



*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question

For those associate of arts institutions that had undergone a state-level review of their student assessment plan or process, approximately half report that the state reviewed the institution's student assessment process itself (48%). States also used comparisons in evaluating institutions' student assessment processes. Comparisons with an institution's own students' past performance is most common (41%), followed by comparisons to peer institutions (38%) and

comparisons with other institutions in the same state (36%). Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are more likely to be compared with peers. Since most states have more than one associate of arts institution, comparison with peers may be more feasible than it is for other types of institutions.

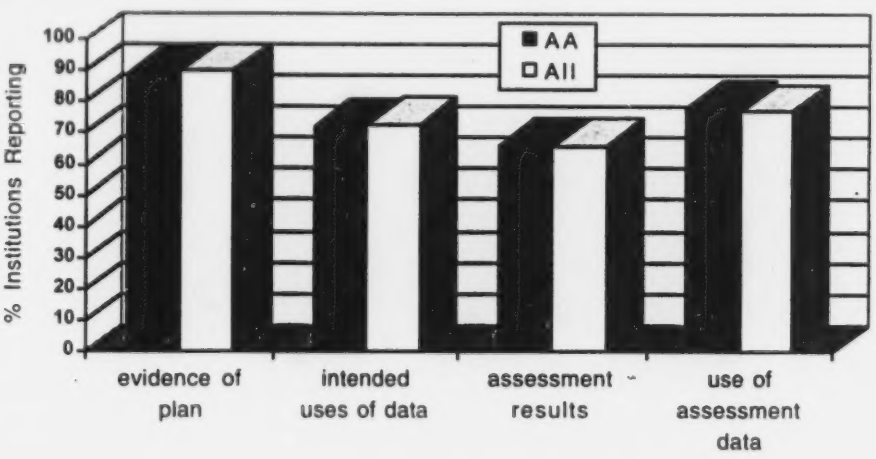
Regional Accrediting Role in Student Assessment

As noted earlier, regional accreditation agencies have been reported as important influences on institutions' decisions to begin or expand their student assessment activities (El-Khawas, 1990, 1992, 1995; Johnson et al., 1991). The majority of associate of arts institutions participating in our study (80%) have completed a regional accreditation review requiring undergraduate student assessment. To further examine the role of regional accreditation associations in student assessment, the survey asked about the reporting requirements for regional accreditation and institutions' perceptions of the influence of regional accreditation requirements on their assessment efforts.

Regional Accreditation Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment

Regional accreditation associations vary in terms of the evidence they require institutions to report on student assessment efforts. It may be expected that requirements to report on the use being made of assessment information may contribute to greater institutional impacts from assessment than requirements that ask merely for evidence of an assessment plan or assessment data. We asked institutions which of the following types of information they were required to report to their regional accreditation association: evidence of a student assessment plan; intended institutional uses of student assessment information; results of student assessment; and evidence of having used student assessment information. Institutions checked all applicable reporting requirements. Very few (4%) of associate of arts institutions were unfamiliar with their regional accreditation requirements for student assessment. Responses from associate of arts and all institutions are displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Regional Accreditation Association Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment



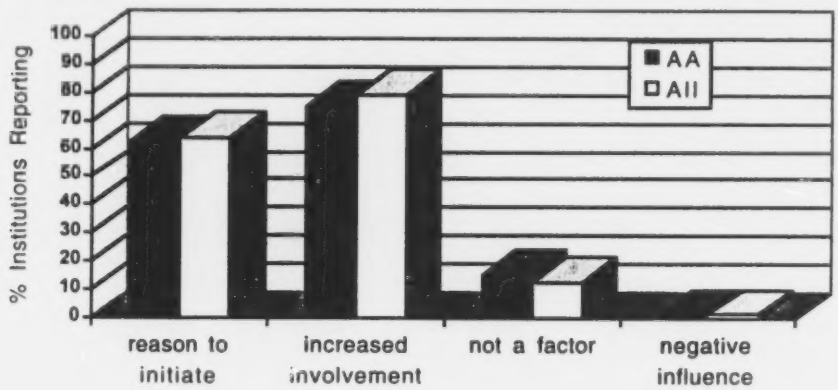
Most associate of arts respondents report that they are required to submit all four of these criteria to their regional accreditation agency. Most institutions are required to submit evidence that they have a student assessment plan in place (89%). The requirement to submit evidence of actual

institutional use of student assessment information (78%) is slightly more common than the requirement to submit only intended institutional uses (72%). While more than half of associate of arts institutions are required to submit the results of student assessment (66%), this requirement is least common among the four. There are no great differences between associate of arts and all institutions on these reporting requirements.

Influence of Regional Accreditation Association Requirements for Student Assessment

What influence have regional accreditation association requirements had on institutions' undergraduate student assessment activities? Institutions were asked which of the following impacts on their student assessment activities they attributed to their regional accreditor's assessment requirements: were an important reason for initiating undergraduate student assessment; increased institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment; were not a factor in institution's undergraduate student assessment activities; or were a negative influence on institution's undergraduate student assessment activities. Institutions selected all applicable influences. Responses from associate of arts and all institutions are displayed in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Influence of Regional Accreditation Requirements for Student Assessment on Institutions' Assessment Activities



Most responding associate of arts institutions report that regional accreditation requirements have increased their involvement with student assessment (75%). Many say that the requirements were an important reason to initiate a student assessment process (62%). Very few associate of arts institutional respondents report that regional accreditation requirements either have not influenced (15%) or have a negative influence on (0.8%) their student assessment process. However, associate of arts institutions seem to be slightly less affected by regional accrediting associations than are all institutions.

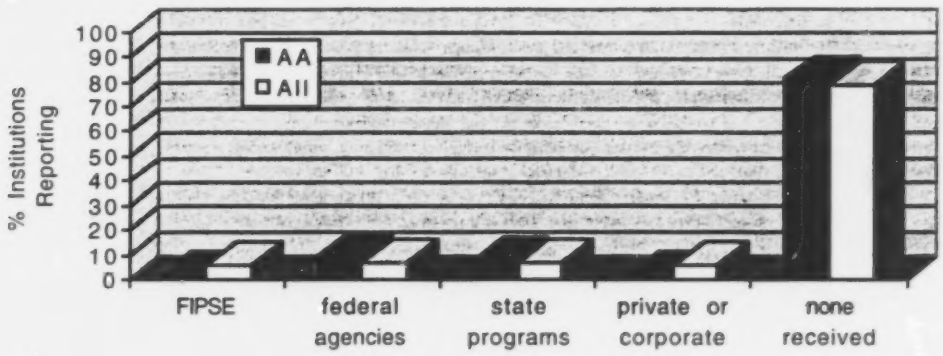
External Sources of Support for Student Assessment

External constituents may influence institutions' involvement in student assessment by providing funding or services to support assessment efforts. Little is known about the extent to which institutions have availed themselves of these external sources of support. Our survey asked institutions about their use of external grants and other services for improving their student assessment efforts.

Receipt of External Grants for Student Assessment

Institutions were asked if they had received grants to improve or support their student assessment practices from any of the following external sources: Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), other federal agencies, state incentive programs, and private foundations or corporate sources. Responses from associate of arts and all institutions are presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Receipt of External Grants for Student Assessment by Source



Approximately one-fifth of responding associate of arts institutions have received an external grant for student assessment. Of the grants that were awarded to associate of arts institutions, most report receiving some type of federal grant other than FIPSE (10%), followed by state grants (8%) and private foundation or corporation and FIPSE grants (both 2%). All institutions are more likely to receive FIPSE and private foundation or corporate grants, while associate of arts institutions are more likely to receive other federal and state grants.

Use of External Services to Support Student Assessment

A variety of postsecondary organizations — professional associations, regional accrediting associations, state-level agencies, and consortia of institutions — provide a range of services intended to support institutions' student assessment efforts. These services include consultation, assessment conferences, training workshops, and publications or research reports on student assessment. For each of these four types of postsecondary organizations, the survey asked institutions which, if any, of these student assessment services they had used. Responses from associate of arts and all institutions are presented in Table 1.

While many associate of arts institutions report that external services are not used or not available, they do use assessment-related services from some types of postsecondary organizations more than others. They are more likely to use services from professional and regional accreditation associations than from state agencies or institutional consortia. They are also likely to use certain types of assessment support services more than others, regardless of service provider. Associate of arts institutions make most frequent use of publications or research reports and conferences on student assessment. A smaller proportion has used training workshops from one or more providers while the smallest proportion has used consultation services. Compared to all institutions in our study, associate of arts institutions make greater use of state-provided training workshops on assessment.

Table 1. Institutional Use of External Services to Support Student Assessment by Service Provider

External Service Provider	% of Institutions Using									
	Services not used or not available		Consultation services		Assessment conferences		Training workshops		Publications or research reports	
	AA	All	AA	All	AA	All	AA	All	AA	All
Professional associations	35	29	11	13	43	51	30	32	46	51
Regional accrediting association	35	30	20	19	39	41	29	32	41	45
State-level agency	42	54	19	14	33	26	31	22	26	22
Consortium of institutions	56	53	12	13	25	30	20	18	16	20

Summary Observations

Both states and regional accrediting agencies have influenced institutions to engage in student assessment. Accrediting associations were reported to have greater influence than states in stimulating associate of arts institutions to initiate involvement in student assessment. Despite the obtrusiveness of these two external bodies, institutions tend to view their mandates and requirements as having a positive influence on their student assessment activities. Part of this positive image may stem from the services provided by states and accreditation associations which these institutions are using to support their student assessment efforts. While institutions are taking advantage of external resources, they are, for the most part, not receiving external funding to support their endeavors. Perhaps funding agents believe that assessing students should be a function of the institutional budget, rather than a special grant-funded project.

Somewhat surprising is the number of associate of arts institutions that have undergone a review of their student assessment plan or process. A majority of institutions have either gone through an accreditation review or a state review (or both) of their assessment process. Both of these review processes go beyond merely reviewing the existence of an assessment plan. Many states have systems in place to compare an institution's student assessment outcomes to either past student outcomes or to those of a peer institution. Many accreditation bodies seek evidence that student assessment information is used in decision-making. The student assessment movement has advanced to the point where almost every institution should have had its student assessment process reviewed by at least one external body.

Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are more likely to be involved with their state on student assessment initiatives. They are more likely to say that their state mandate increased their involvement with assessment, they are more likely to receive a grant from their state, and they are more likely to take advantage of workshops on student assessment provided by the state. Associate of arts institutions are also more likely to be public, which may account for these differences.

4. APPROACHES TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Addresses the type or content of student assessment measures used by institutions, the timing of those assessments, their use of standardized instruments and less traditional student assessment methods, and types of assessment studies conducted and student performance reports produced. Associate of arts institutions are not fully engaged with student assessment at this point in time, but most often collect data on students' basic college-readiness skills, their academic intentions, and their academic progress, and least often collect data on higher-order skills, students' personal growth, and former students' civic or social roles.

Assessment approach decisions may be influenced by external mandates, institutional context, and the organizational and administrative environment. An institution's assessment approach may shape the uses and impacts of assessment information. Assessment scholars contend that institutions which collect comprehensive student assessment information — those which collect data on various dimensions of student performance, at multiple points in time, through a variety of assessment methods — and which conduct and report a variety of analyses of assessment data are more likely to use and achieve positive impacts from student assessment data.

What approaches to student assessment have associate of arts institutions adopted? The ISSA instrument addressed the type or content of student assessment measures used by institutions, the timing of those assessments, their use of standardized instruments and less traditional student assessment methods, and types of assessment studies conducted and student performance reports produced. Here we examine the profile of student assessment approaches in associate of arts institutions and compare it to the profile for all types of postsecondary institutions.

Type and Extent of Student Data Collected

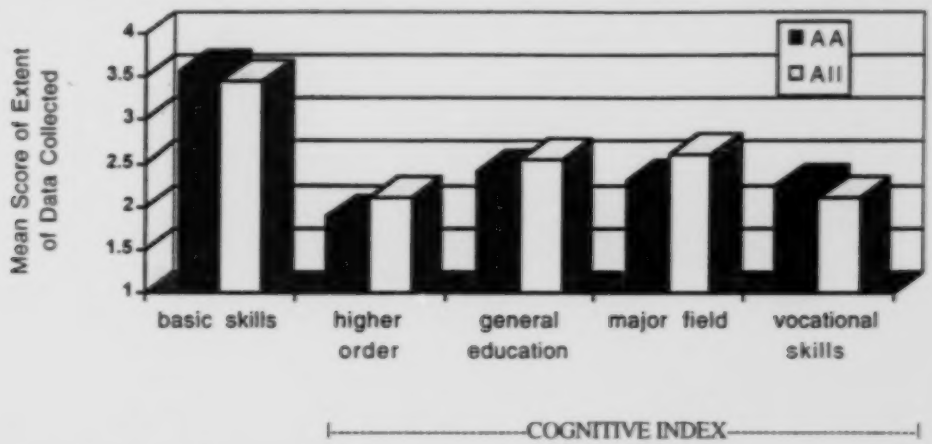
Data Collected on Current Students

What types of data do institutions collect from their students? Survey respondents reported the extent to which their institution collects data on ten types of student data for currently enrolled students and four measures for former students. Figures 10, 11, and 12 display mean scores for the extent to which associate of arts institutions and all institutions collect these data.

Cognitive Data. Figure 10 shows the extent to which institutions collect five types of cognitive student assessment data: basic college-readiness skills, higher-order skills (e.g., critical thinking and problem solving), general education competencies, competence in major field of study (discipline- or program-specific knowledge), and vocational or professional skills. The latter four of these five types of data factored together to create a "cognitive assessment" index that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight.

Associate of arts institutions collect the most data on students' basic college-readiness skills (3.56), collecting these data for "many" students. This finding is not surprising, given the open admissions policies of most associate of arts institutions. Conversely, associate of arts institutions tend to collect less data on higher-order skills (1.88), general education competence (2.41), competence in the students' major (2.30), and vocational skills (2.25), collecting these data only on "some" students. Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are more likely to collect data on both basic and vocational skills. They are less likely to collect cognitive data on higher-order skills, general education skills, and competence in the students' major.

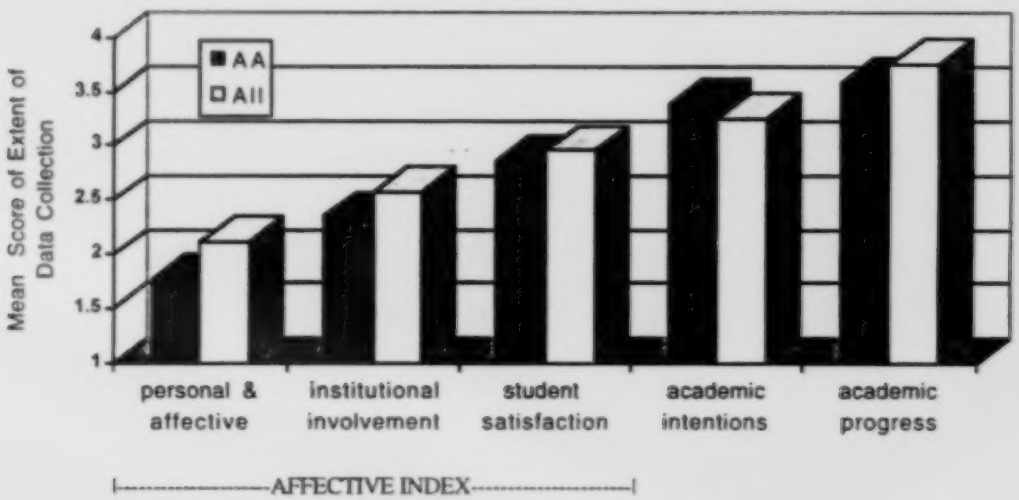
Figure 10. Extent of Cognitive Data Collected on Current Students



1=not collected; 2=collected for some students; 3=collected for many students; 4=collected for all students.

Affective and Behavioral Data. Figure 11 presents five types of affective and behavioral data collected on currently enrolled students: personal growth and affective development, student experiences and involvement with the institution, student satisfaction with the institution, students' academic intentions, and students' academic progress. The first three of these items factored together into an "affective assessment" index that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight.

Figure 11. Extent of Affective and Behavioral Data Collected on Current Students



1=not collected; 2=collected for some students; 3=collected for many students; 4=collected for all students.

Associate of arts institutions are most likely to collect data on students' academic progress (3.58). This finding parallels the proclivity of these institutions to measure students' academic intentions (3.38). Because of the varied student goals at associate of arts institutions, one way to

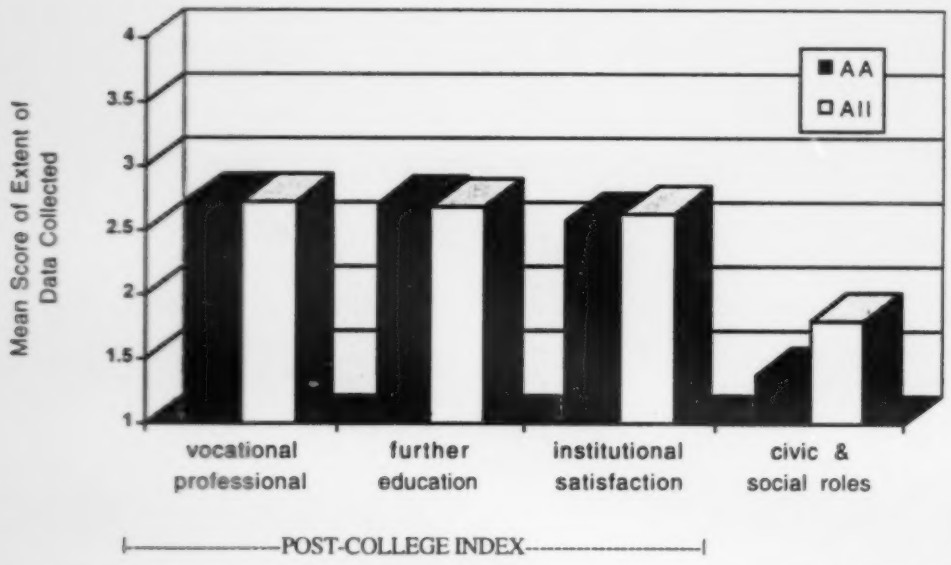
measure student success is to discern students' goals and then to track students, ensuring that they are meeting their goals. Nonetheless, more institutions measure students' academic progress than their academic intentions. Although one would think that it is necessary to first discern students' academic intentions before evaluating their academic progress, it is probably easier to monitor academic progress via transcripts and other institutional data than it is to collect and update information on students' goals.

Associate of arts institutions are less likely to measure either students' satisfaction (2.86) or their involvement (2.35) with the institution. They are least likely to collect data on students' personal and affective growth (1.77). These institutions are less likely to collect data on students' personal growth than on any other type of student outcome listed on our instrument for current students. Perhaps associate of arts students are not at the institution long enough to enable measuring growth over time. Furthermore, most associate of arts students do not live on campus and it would be difficult to attribute the personal growth they experience over any given time period to their interaction with the institution. Compared to all institutions in our study, associate of arts institutions are less likely to collect data on students in all these affective/behavioral areas, except for academic intentions.

Data Collected on Former Students

Figure 12 displays mean scores for the extent to which associate of arts and all institutions collect four types of data from former students: civic or social roles (e.g., political, social, or community involvement), satisfaction and experiences with the institution after leaving, further education (e.g., transfer, degree attainment, graduate study), and vocational or professional outcomes (e.g., job attainment or performance). These latter three items factored together to create a "post-college" index used in regression analyses presented in section eight.

Figure 12. The Extent of Data Collected on Former Students



1=not collected; 2=collected for some students; 3=collected for many students; 4=collected for all students.

Associate of arts institutions collect data on "some" to "many" students on vocational outcomes (2.73), further education (2.71), and their satisfaction (2.57). They are least likely to

collect data on students' post-college civic or social roles (1.37). Most associate of arts institutions do not collect this data, perhaps believing that students spend too little time on their campuses to warrant linking post-college civic roles to their campus experiences. Compared to all institutions in our study, associate of arts institutions are much less likely to measure post-college civic roles than are all institutions in our study.

Timing of Data Collection

Researchers have stressed that it is particularly important for institutions to collect student assessment data on students at varying points in time, in order to assure that students are meeting their academic goals and that the college experience is "value-added." When are associate of arts institutions collecting student assessment data? Table 2 presents the timing of the student assessment data collection efforts for each of nine measures of student performance for associate of arts and all institutions. Institutional respondents told us whether they collect such data at entry, during student enrollment, and/or at exit. Respondents could choose all applicable responses.

Timing of Collecting Cognitive Data

With the exception of basic skills data, most cognitive data are collected either while the student is enrolled or at exit. It is not surprising that most associate of arts institutions which collect basic skills data do so at the point of entry into the institution (98%). However, only one-fifth of these institutions report that basic skills are assessed while the student is enrolled. More than half of the associate of arts institutions which collect data on a student's competence in the major do so while the student is enrolled (61%) and again at exit (59%). While this finding seems to indicate that students are assessed at more than one point in time, in actuality, less than half (42%) of associate of arts institutions are collecting major competence data on students *both* while enrolled *and* at exit—the remaining institutions are collecting major competence data *either* while the student is enrolled *or* at exit. There are no great differences between associate of arts and all institutions on their timing of data collection.

Table 2. Institutions Collecting Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Student Assessment Data at Entry, While Student is Enrolled, and at Exit

	% Institutions Collecting Data					
	At Entry		While Enrolled		At Exit	
Data Collected	AA	All	AA	All	AA	All
Cognitive Data						
Basic Skills	98	97	19	21	6	8
Higher Order Skills	24	32	63	66	33	33
General Education	30	32	56	64	40	36
Major Competence	12	9	61	62	59	64
Vocational Skills	14	10	63	67	61	60
Affective and Behavioral Data						
Personal Growth	16	32	72	67	33	41
Student Involvement	4	7	71	72	51	55
Student Satisfaction	4	7	69	71	62	65
Academic Intentions	94	92	32	36	14	19

Timing of Collecting Affective and Behavioral Data

With the exception of academic intentions, most affective data are collected either during enrollment or at exit. In terms of academic intentions, it again is not surprising that students' intentions are collected at entry (94% collect these data at entry). It seems apparent that these intentions are not assessed again, even though students' goals may change throughout their time at an institution. Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are less likely to develop a benchmark of students' personal growth at entry.

Student Assessment Instruments and Methods Used

Institutions engaging in student assessment efforts must select the means by which assessment data will be collected. A traditional choice is to use assessment instruments, generally in the form of objective examinations or inventories administered in a pencil and paper or computerized format. More recently, there has been growing interest in alternative methods of assessing students. These non-traditional methods tend to be more qualitative or integrative in approach — requiring students to demonstrate higher-order cognitive skills such as application or synthesis — or may use sources of information other than students themselves. Further, as the student body entering postsecondary institutions becomes more diverse through the increased enrollment of part-time, older, and minority students), some scholars have suggested the need to use special assessment methods to reflect the unique characteristics, learning styles, needs, and life situations of various sub-populations of students.

Student Assessment Instruments

How are institutions collecting student assessment data? Survey respondents reported whether their institution used instruments or tests to collect any of ten types of assessment information: nine for current students (basic college-readiness skills; higher-order skills; general education competencies; competence in major field of study; vocational or professional skills; academic intentions; personal growth and affective development; experiences and involvement with the institution; and satisfaction with the institution) and one for former students (alumni satisfaction and experiences). If an instrument is used, respondents specified its source — institutionally-developed, state-provided, or commercially available. Figures 13 and 14 present information on these ten types of assessment information collected via traditional instruments or tests by associate of arts and all institutions.

Figure 13. Institutional Use of Student Assessment Instruments to Collect Cognitive Data

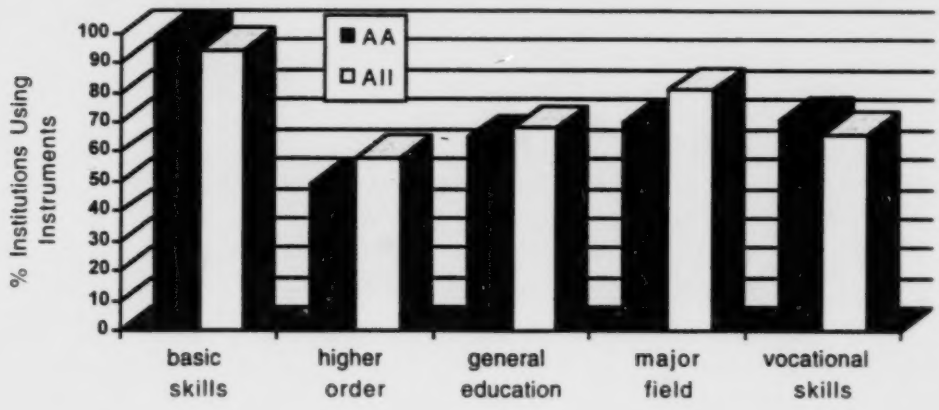
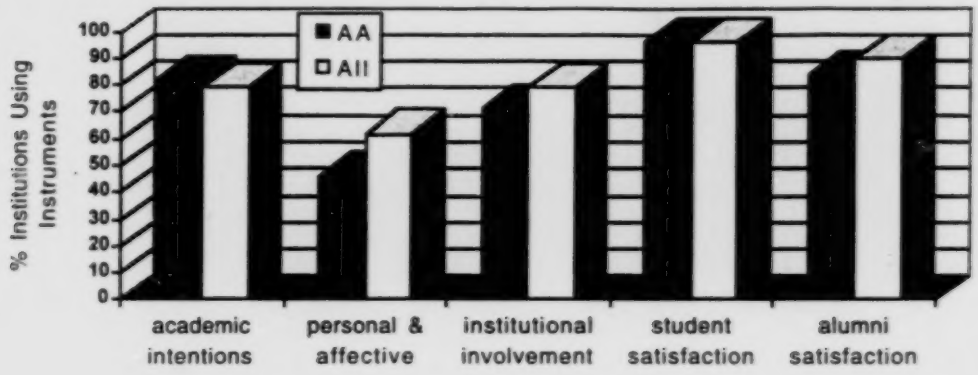


Figure 14. Institutional Use of Student Assessment Instruments to Collect Affective and Behavioral Data



As Figures 13 and 14 show, the use of assessment instruments or tests varies with the type of assessment data collected. Associate of arts institutions are most likely to use instruments or inventories to collect data on basic college-readiness skills (99%), student (96%) and alumni (84%) satisfaction, and student intentions (82%). These institutions are least likely to use instruments or inventories to collect data on students' personal growth and affective development (46%), higher-order cognitive skills (49%), general education competencies (65%), and competence in the major (70%). Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are less likely, in general, to use instruments to assess students. Specifically, they are less likely to use instruments to measure personal growth, higher-order skills, students' experiences, competencies in the major field, general education competencies, and alumni satisfaction. Associate of arts institutions are more likely to use instruments to measure basic skills, vocational skills, and students' academic intentions.

Other Student Assessment Methods

Institutions also reported the extent to which they use each of nine alternative methods of assessing students. Table 3 presents this information for associate of arts and all institutions. Four of these options require more active participation of currently enrolled students and factored together to create a "student-centered" index of assessment methods that we used in regression

Table 3. Mean Scores of Extent of Use of Other Student Assessment Methods

Student Assessment Methods	Associate of Arts (n=539)	All Institutions (n=1393)
Student-Centered		
Observations of student performance	2.22	2.26
Student portfolios or comprehensive projects	1.95	2.10
Student performance in capstone courses	1.78	2.15
Student interviews or focus groups	1.65	1.84
Externally Oriented		
Employer interviews or focus groups	1.98	1.87
Alumni interviews or focus groups	1.80	1.90
Other Methods		
Surveys or interviews with withdrawing students	2.26	2.40
Transcript analysis	2.19	2.16
External examination of students	2.01	2.02

1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units

analyses presented in section eight: observations of student performance, student portfolios or comprehensive projects, student performance in capstone courses, and student interviews or focus groups. None of these four methods is used extensively by associate of arts institutions. They are most likely to use observations of student performance (2.22). The other three student-centered methods are either not used by associate of arts institutions or only used in some units. The least often used of these three methods is interviews or focus groups with students (1.65).

Two of the other alternative measures rely on information from external groups or sources and factored together to create an index of "external methods" of student assessment that we used in regression analyses in section eight: alumni interviews or focus groups, and employer interviews or focus groups. Associate of arts institutions are more likely to interview or hold focus groups with employers (1.98) than with alumni (1.80), which parallels associate of arts institutions' traditionally strong ties to their employer communities.

There were three additional alternative student assessment measures listed in our survey: transcript analysis, using external examinations, and surveying or interviewing withdrawing students. Of these three, associate of arts institutions are most likely to survey/interview withdrawing students (2.26). They are least likely to use external examiners or examinations of students and their use of transcript analysis falls in the middle of these two.

Compared to all institutions in our study, associate of arts institutions are less likely to use all four of the student-centered methods for collecting assessment data. Regarding external methods, for all institutions in our study, alumni interviews/focus groups are more common than employer interviews/focus groups, which is the opposite pattern for associate of arts institutions. For the remaining alternative methods, all institutions are more likely to survey or interview withdrawing students than are associate of arts institutions.

Assessment Methods for Student Sub-Populations

Do institutions use different assessment methods for specific sub-populations of their student body? Table 4 presents the percentage of associate of arts and all institutions using different assessment methods for four student sub-populations: adult students, part-time students, minority students, and distance education students.

Table 4. Institutional Use of Different Assessment Methods for Different Student Sub-Populations

	% Institutions Using Different Assessment Methods	
Student Sub-Population	Associate of Arts (n=545)	All Institutions (n=1366)
Adult students	3	10
Part-time students	3	5
Minority students	2	2
Distance education students	21	22

Most associate of arts institutions do not use different assessment methods for specific sub-populations of undergraduate students. While 21% report using different methods for distance education students, a decision that may be necessitated by the medium used for course delivery, very few use special methods for collecting assessment data from their adult, part-time, or minority students. This finding is likely reflective of the populations attending associate of arts institutions—often part-time or adult students comprise the majority of, rather than a specific sub-population of students. Therefore, it is not surprising that when compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are even less likely to use different assessment measures for adult students (3% vs. 10%).

Student Assessment Studies and Reports

Beyond collecting descriptive data on their students' characteristics, performance, or development, institutions must consider how to transform the data into useful information. Institutions that study the relationship between various aspects of students' institutional experiences and their performance should be better able to make informed decisions concerning academic and student-related practices and policies. Another consideration is the level of aggregation at which assessment information is analyzed and reported.

Student Assessment Studies

Are institutions studying how student performance is connected to experiences with the institution? In our survey, we asked if institutions conduct studies of the relationship between nine areas of students' institutional experiences and students' performance. Table 5 identifies these areas and presents data on institutional studies for both associate of arts and all institutions.

Many associate of arts institutional respondents (45%) report that they do not conduct any of these studies on students' experiences. For those that do conduct studies, they are most likely to study relationships with student financial aid and/or concurrent employment (27%); admissions standards or policies (27%); student course-taking patterns (26%); exposure to different instructional or teaching methods (26%); and academic advising patterns (24%). They are least likely to conduct studies on residence arrangements (6%), patterns of student-faculty interaction (11%), and extra-curricular experiences (15%).

Table 5. Institutions Conducting Student Assessment Studies

Studies of Relationship Between Student Performance and the Following Experiences	% Institutions Conducting Studies	
	Associate of Arts (n=519)	All Institutions (n=1329)
Do not study these experiences	45	38
Student financial aid and/or concurrent employment	27	30
Admission standards or policies	27	42
Student course-taking patterns	26	26
Exposure to different instructional or teaching methods	25	21
Academic advising patterns	24	26
Classroom, library and/or computing resources	19	17
Extra-curricular activities	15	24
Patterns of student-faculty interaction	11	14
Residence arrangements	6	21

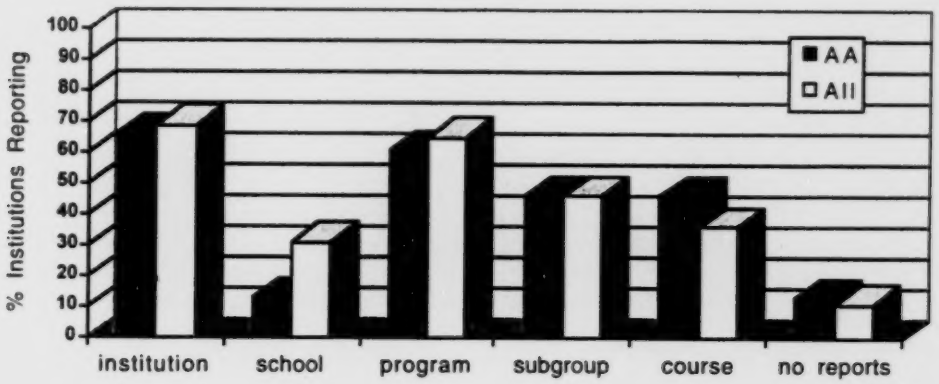
Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are slightly less likely to conduct studies on student-faculty interaction. While associate of arts institutions are less likely to conduct studies in general, most other comparisons demonstrate that the pattern of conducting studies is quite similar for associate of arts institutions and for all institutions, except for where differences would be expected, such as in studying either resident arrangements or admissions standards or policies.

Student Assessment Reports

Finally, institutions were asked to report the levels of aggregation at which they provide reports of student assessment information. Figure 15 shows the percentage of associate of arts and all institutions providing student assessment reports at five levels of aggregation: institution-wide; school or college; program; special population of students; and course or groups of courses.

Respondents indicated as many levels of aggregation as were applicable or could indicate that they provide no reports of student assessment information.

Figure 15. Preparation of Student Performance Reports by Level of Aggregation



Most associate of arts respondents prepare reports on student assessment results (87%). The most prevalent level of aggregation used is institution-wide (66%), followed closely by academic program/department (61%). The least prevalent level of aggregation for associate of arts institutions is by school or college (13%). Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are less likely to provide student assessment data at the school or college level, likely because these institutions are not typically organized into discrete schools or colleges.

Summary Observations

Associate of arts institutions are more likely to collect data on students' basic college-readiness skills, their academic intentions, and their academic progress than on any other types of student skills or outcomes. Conversely, associate of arts institutions are least likely to collect data on higher-order skills, students' personal growth, and former students' civic or social roles. All types of student assessment data are most likely to be collected at only one point in time. In collecting student data, associate of arts institutions are more likely to use traditional tests and instruments than to engage in more student-centered methods. Slightly more than half of all responding associate of arts institutions said they conduct studies on students linking their performance to their interaction with the institution, and a great majority of respondents provide reports on the results of student assessment initiatives. However, it appears that, on average, associate of arts institutions are not fully engaged with student assessment at this point in time, given the limited types of assessment data collected, the limited points in time of the data collection, and the limited number of studies connecting student performance to institutional experiences.

Further evidence for this finding is found in comparing associate of arts to all institutions. Associate of arts institutions are less likely to collect cognitive and affective data, less likely to use student-centered methods in collecting data, and less likely to conduct studies linking student performance to students' interactions with their institution. Perhaps because associate of arts students are more likely to be attending part-time and to be commuting, it is more difficult to engage them in assessment activities.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PATTERNS

Focuses on the patterns of organizational and administrative support that institutions have developed to promote student assessment on their campuses, such as their mission and purpose, institution-wide activities, leadership support, and planning and coordinating mechanisms. Associate of arts institutions' patterns are varied and reflect that many of these support processes are administratively, rather than faculty, driven.

An important focus of our study was to examine the patterns of organizational and administrative support institutions have developed to promote student assessment on their campuses. The assessment literature suggests that institutions will be most likely to promote internal support for assessment if they engage in assessment for internal rather than external purposes, have visible and strong leadership support for assessment, include a broad range of internal participants — particularly faculty — in making assessment-related decisions, and regularly evaluate their assessment programs. It is expected that organizational and administrative support will shape the assessment approach, assessment management practices and policies, and ultimately, the institutional uses and impacts of assessment information.

The ISSA instrument included questions concerning the institution-wide assessment support strategy; administrative and governance activities used to promote student assessment; leadership and faculty support for assessment; planning and coordination for assessment; and evaluation of student assessment processes. Once again, we will present information concerning the pattern of organizational and administrative support for student assessment in associate of arts institutions and compare it to the pattern for all types of postsecondary institutions.

Institution-Wide Assessment Support Strategy

Mission Emphasis

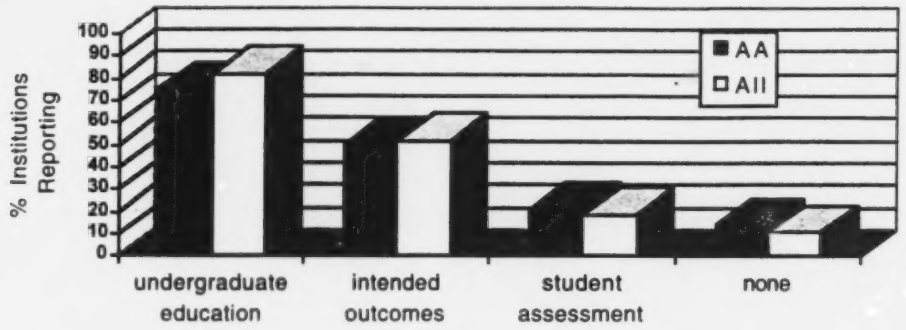
Assessment scholars and practitioners suggest that institutions' academic mission content may symbolize the importance with which student assessment is regarded and so may influence the degree of internal support for assessment. What do the mission statements of our responding institutions tell us about their values regarding student assessment? Institutions reported whether their mission statement explicitly: a) emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education, b) identifies intended student outcomes, c) refers to student assessment as an important priority, or d) does not mention any of these. Respondents could answer "yes" to more than one mission statement component. Figure 16 displays the percentage of associate of arts and all institutions reporting each of these mission statement components.

Most associate of arts institutions emphasize excellence in undergraduate education in their mission statements (75%) and half identify intended student outcomes. Approximately one-fifth of associate of arts institutions refer to student assessment as an important activity in their mission statement. Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are less likely to emphasize excellence in undergraduate education in their mission statements

Purposes for Engaging in Student Assessment

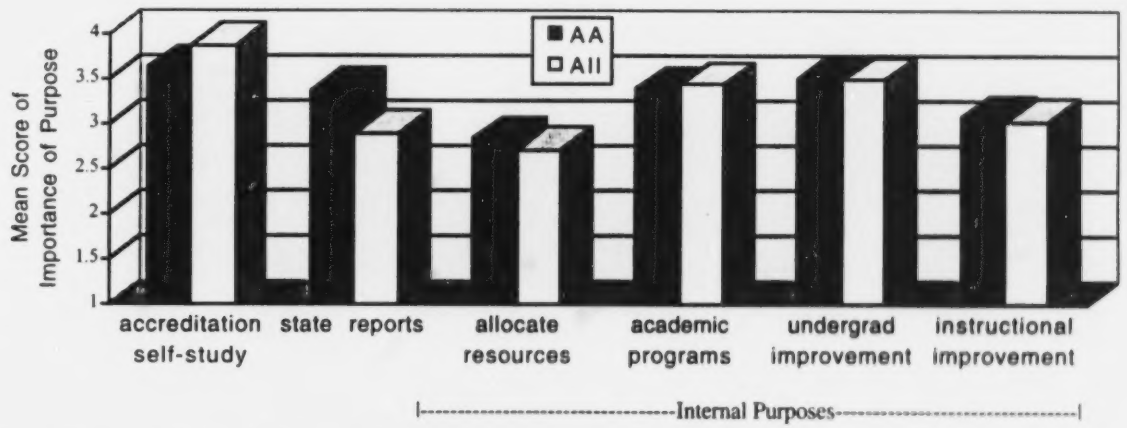
Why are institutions engaging in student assessment? A second dimension of institution-wide assessment support examined in this study is the purpose(s) underlying institutions' student assessment efforts. Scholars contend that whether assessment is primarily engaged in for internal or for external purposes may influence the nature of an institution's assessment approach, degree

Figure 16. Institutional Mission Emphasis



of internal support, and assessment uses and impacts. Institutions rated the importance of six purposes for engaging in student assessment: preparing for an accreditation self-study; meeting state reporting requirements; guiding internal resource allocation decisions; guiding undergraduate academic program improvement; improving the achievement of undergraduate students; and improving faculty instructional performance. The last four of these purposes were factored into an index of internal purposes for student assessment for use in regression analyses presented in section eight. Figure 17 presents the mean scores for each student assessment purpose for associate of arts and all institutions.

Figure 17. Purposes of Student Assessment



Scale: 1=no importance; 2=minor importance; 3=moderate importance; 4=very important

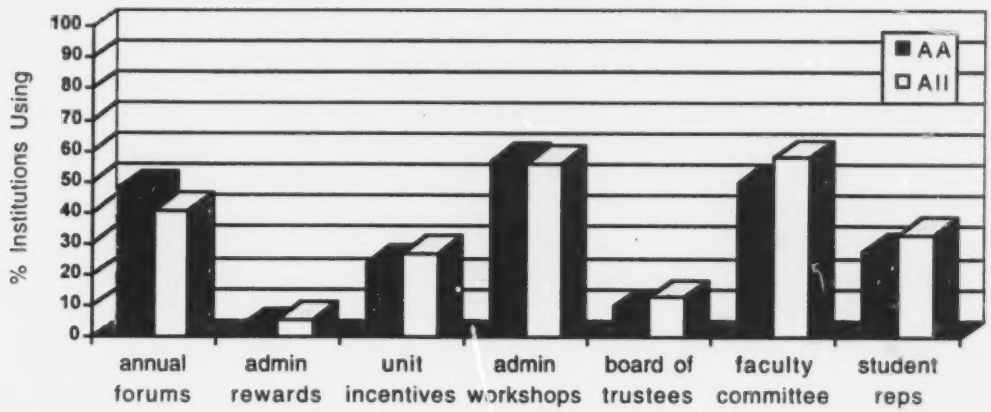
Associate of arts institutions report that preparing a self-study for accreditation is the most important reason to engage in student assessment (3.61), followed by improving the achievement of undergraduate students (3.50), guiding undergraduate academic program improvement (3.38), and meeting state reporting requirements (3.37). All are rated "moderate" to "very" important. They are less likely to say that improving faculty instructional performance (3.06) or guiding internal resource allocation decisions (2.83) is an important reason for engaging in student assessment.

Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are more likely to report that meeting state requirements is an important reason to engage in student assessment. A greater percentage of associate of arts institutions are public—likely explaining this difference. A smaller percentage of associate of arts institutions are likely to say that preparing for a self-study is an important reason to engage in student assessment.

Institution-Wide Administrative and Governance Activities

Institutions may develop a variety of administrative activities and governance structures to promote student assessment on an institution-wide basis. How prevalent are these practices? The ISSA instrument asked whether institutions use any of the following administrative activities and governance structures: annual institution-wide initiatives on assessment; rewards or incentives for academic and student affairs administrators to use student assessment in their units; incentives for academic units to use assessment information in evaluation and improvement efforts; student assessment workshops for academic and student affairs administrators; board of trustees committee that addresses student assessment; faculty governance committee that addresses student assessment issues; and student representation on student assessment committees. Figure 18 displays the percentage of associate of arts and all institutions that have introduced these activities or structures in their institutions.

Figure 18. Institution-Wide Administrative and Governance Activities Used to Promote Student Assessment



None of these seven activities is used pervasively by associate of arts institutions. Institutions are most likely to provide assessment workshops for academic and student affairs administrators (57%), to have a faculty governance committee that addresses assessment issues (50%), and to present annual institution-wide student assessment forums (48%). They are less likely to have student representation on assessment committees (28%) or to provide incentives for academic units to use assessment information in evaluation and improvement efforts (24%). They are least likely to have a board of trustees committee that addresses assessment (10%) or to provide rewards or incentives for academic and student affairs administrators who promote units' use of assessment (4%).

Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are less likely to have a faculty governance committee that addresses assessment issues. Associate of arts institutions are also less likely to have student representation on assessment committees, perhaps due to the greater

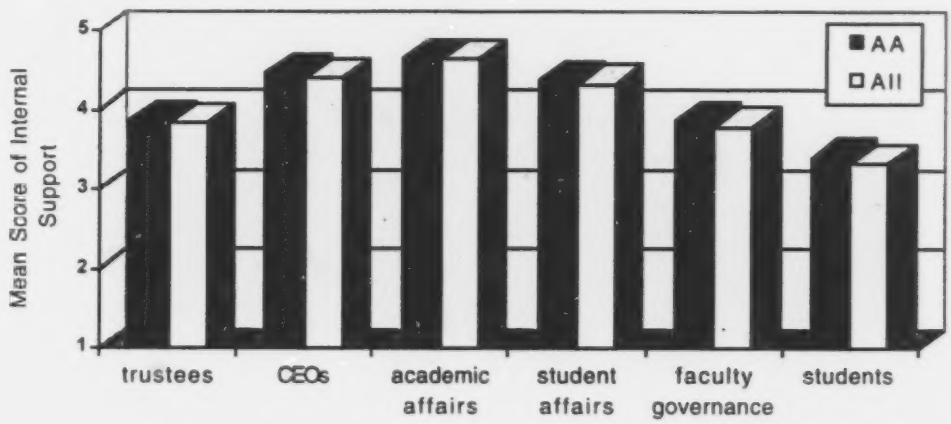
percentage of part-time students found at these institutions. Associate of arts institutions, on the other hand, are more likely to hold annual institution-wide student assessment forums.

Leadership and Faculty Support for Student Assessment

The degree to which student assessment efforts are supported internally is likely an important determinant of the extent and impact of an institution's student assessment activities. How supportive of student assessment are various internal constituencies? We asked survey respondents to rate the degree to which six positions or groups support undergraduate student assessment activities: board of trustees; chief executive officer; academic affairs administrators; student affairs administrators; faculty governance; and students. Figure 19 presents the mean responses to this question for associate of arts and all institutions.

Institutions report high levels of support for student assessment, with most constituents at least somewhat supportive. Associate of arts respondents report that academic affairs administrators are most supportive (4.64), followed by the chief executive officer (4.47) and student affairs administrators (4.38). Boards of trustees (3.87) and faculty governance bodies (3.87) are slightly less supportive, while student support is seen as neutral or unknown (3.40). In all cases, associate of arts institutions' constituents are reported as either equally or more supportive than constituents from all institutions in the study.

Figure 19. Internal Constituent Support for Student Assessment



1=very unsupportive; 2=somewhat unsupportive; 3=neutral, unknown; 4=somewhat supportive; 5=very supportive

Planning and Coordinating Student Assessment

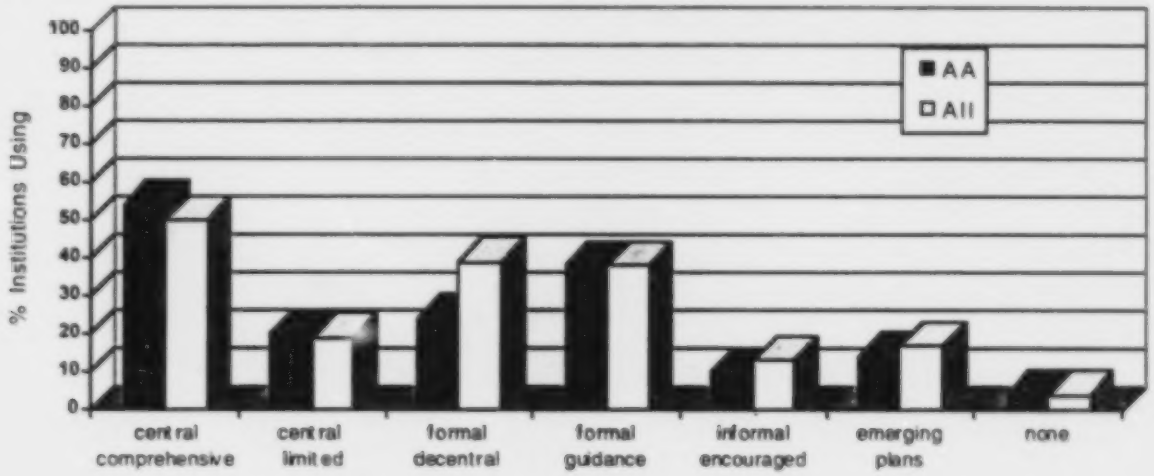
A central issue in discussions of leadership and governance for student assessment concerns the degree to which responsibility for planning and coordinating student assessment activities is centralized or decentralized within institutions. Centralized approaches that focus such responsibility on senior administrators or central offices may signal that assessment is a valued institutional activity, but decentralized approaches involving an array of internal participants may do more to promote broader internal support for assessment. How do institutions plan and coordinate their assessment efforts? We asked institutional respondents about six aspects of their assessment planning and coordination process: the nature of an institutional plan or policy for student assessment; membership on an institution-wide planning group for assessment; executive

responsibility for the assessment planning process; approval authority for assessment plans; operational responsibility for student assessment; and reporting patterns.

Institutional Plan or Policy for Student Assessment

We asked survey respondents which of seven types of institutional plans or policies for student assessment best describe what exists at their institution: 1) formal comprehensive centralization — a formally adopted plan or policy specifying undergraduate student assessment activities for all academic programs or units; 2) formal limited centralization — a formally adopted plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment in some academic programs or units; 3) formal decentralization — a formally adopted institutional plan or policy requiring all academic units or programs to develop their own undergraduate student assessment plan; 4) formal guidance — a formally adopted institutional plan or policy identifying institution-wide activities to be conducted by a central committee or office; 5) informal encouragement — no institutional plan or policy but academic units or programs are encouraged to develop their own undergraduate student assessment activities; 6) emergent — institution is currently developing a plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment; and 7) none — institution does not have an undergraduate student assessment plan or policy. Respondents could select more than one type of plan or policy. Figure 20 presents the percentage of associate of arts and all institutions using each type of assessment plan or policy.

Figure 20. Types of Institutional Plan or Policy for Student Assessment



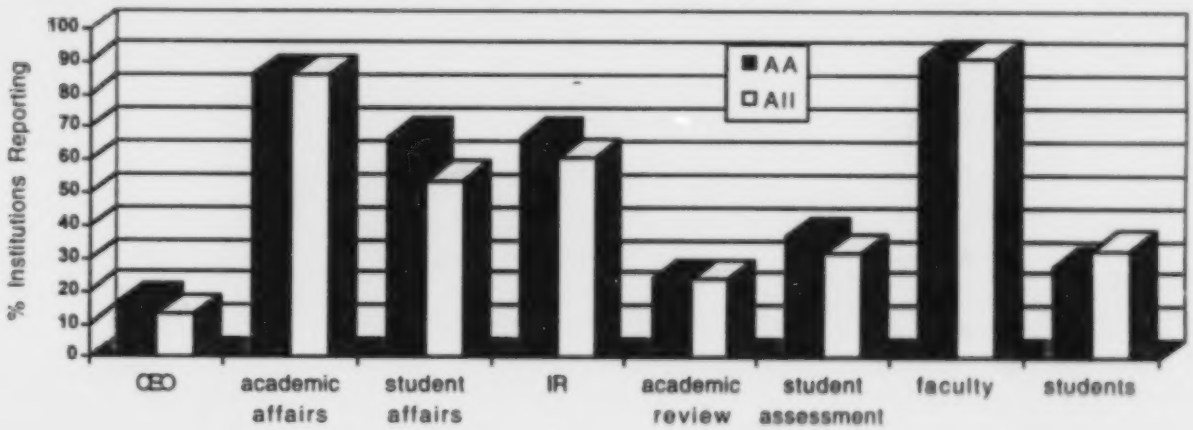
Virtually all associate of arts institutions report that they have a plan or policy for student assessment; only 4% have no policy or plan. Associate of arts institutions are most likely to report that they have a formal centralized student assessment policy (54%), followed by a formal guidance policy (38%). They are less likely to have any of the other types of plan or policy. The greatest difference between associate of arts and all institutions is that all institutions are more likely to have a formal decentralized policy. Since associate of arts institutions often have more centralized administrative governance patterns and are less likely to have discrete operating units, this finding is not surprising. In fact, associate of arts institutions are more likely than all institutions in our study to have the most formal and most centralized plan or policy for student assessment.

Institution-Wide Assessment Planning Group Membership

Who is involved in student assessment planning? We asked respondents whether they have an institution-wide group responsible for ongoing planning and policy setting for undergraduate assessment. Fully 73% of associate of arts institutions and 70% of all institutions report having such a group. Of those institutions with institution-wide planning groups, we asked which of the following internal constituents serves on the group: chief executive officer, academic affairs administrator or staff, student affairs administrator or staff, institutional research administrator or staff, academic review and evaluation administrator or staff, student assessment administrator or staff, faculty, and students. Respondents checked as many constituents as were applicable. Figure 21 presents the percentage of associate of arts and all institutions responding to whether each constituent is a member of their assessment planning group.

For associate of arts institutions with a planning group, student assessment planning committees are staffed by faculty (in 91% of the institutions) and academic administrators (86%). They also are likely to have student affairs administrators (67%) and institutional research personnel (67%) on their planning committees. They are less likely to have student assessment staff (37%), students (28%), academic review or evaluation staff (24%), or the chief executive officer (17%) involved. Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are more likely to have student affairs staff, institutional research personnel, and student assessment staff on their planning committees, but are less likely to include students.

Figure 21. Membership on Institution-Wide Student Assessment Planning Group*

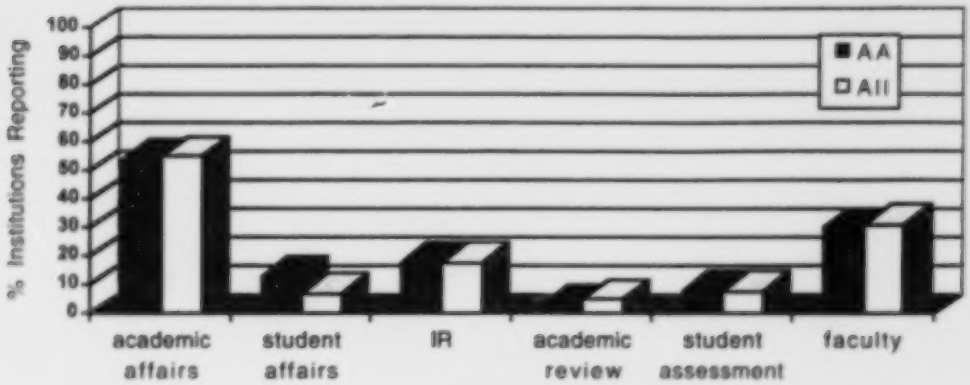


*Only institutions with institution-wide planning groups for student assessment responded to this question

Executive Responsibility for Assessment Planning Process

Another indicator of the governance process used for student assessment is where formal leadership for assessment planning is vested in an institution. We asked institutions which of the following positions has executive responsibility for or chairs the institution-wide group for student assessment planning: academic affairs administrator; student affairs administrator; institutional research officer; academic review and evaluation officer; student assessment officer; or faculty member. Figure 22 presents this information for associate of arts and all institutions.

Figure 22. Executive Responsibility for Student Assessment Planning Group



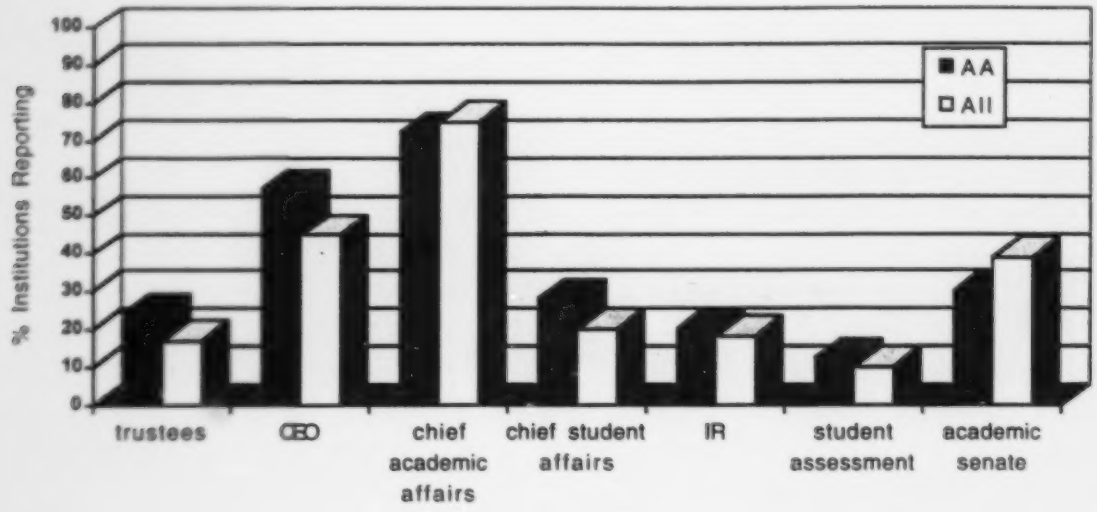
At more than half of associate of arts institutions, academic administrators have responsibility for the student assessment planning group (54%), followed by a faculty member (30%). Less than 20% of the institutions have vested an institutional research officer or a student affairs administrator with executive responsibility for the student assessment planning group. It is very rare for either academic review (3%) or student assessment administrators (8%) to have executive responsibility for the student assessment planning group at associate of arts institutions. The pattern is similar for all institutions. There is a modest difference between associate of arts and all institutions in that associate of arts institutions are more likely to appoint a student affairs administrator to lead student assessment initiatives.

Approval Authority for Student Assessment Plan

As a final aspect of governance for assessment planning, we asked institutions to identify who, among ten possible positions or groups, approves changes in their institutional plan or policy for student assessment: board of trustees; chief executive officer; chief academic affairs officer; chief student affairs officer; institutional research officer; academic review and evaluation officer; student assessment officer; student government; academic senate or other faculty committee; and faculty union. All respondents could answer this question regardless of whether or not they had an institution-wide committee for assessment planning. Respondents indicated as many positions or groups as were applicable. Only 11% of associate of arts institutions report that academic review and evaluation officers, student government, or faculty union personnel have approval authority for the institutional assessment plan or policy. Figure 23 presents the results for the remaining seven positions for associate of arts and all institutions.

Over 70% of associate of arts institutions report that the chief academic officer has approval authority for student assessment. The chief executive officer has such authority in approximately half the institutions. Associate of arts institutions are not likely to invest approval authority in a student assessment officer (12%), an institutional researcher (20%), the board of trustees (24%), a chief student affairs officer (28%), or an academic senate (30%). Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are more likely to invest the chief executive officer, the board of trustees, or the chief student affairs officer with approval authority. Boards at associate of arts institutions may be more involved with teaching and learning issues than are boards at other institutions. Conversely, associate of arts institutions are less likely to invest the chief academic officer or the academic senate with student assessment approval authority.

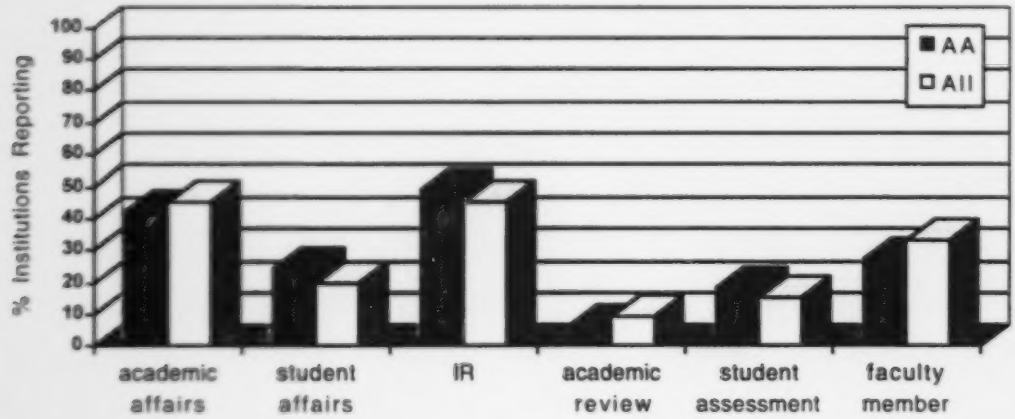
Figure 23. Approval Authority for Student Assessment Plan or Policy



Operational Responsibility for Day-to-Day Student Assessment Activities

Beyond the planning phase of student assessment, institutions must decide where to place responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day undergraduate student assessment activities such as instrument development, data collection, analysis, and reporting. Where have institutions placed operational responsibility for student assessment? We asked institutions which of six positions or offices has responsibility for day-to-day student assessment activities: academic affairs administrator; student affairs administrator; institutional research officer; academic review and evaluation officer; student assessment officer; and faculty member(s). Institutions checked as many positions/offices as applied. Figure 24 presents the results for associate of arts and all institutions.

Figure 24. Operating Responsibility for Day-to-Day Student Assessment Activities



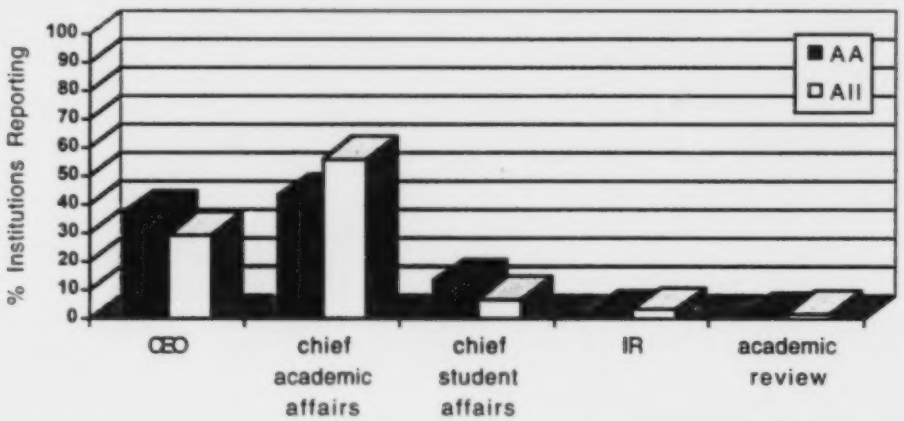
At associate of arts institutions, either an institutional research officer (49%) or an academic affairs administrator (42%) is most likely to be responsible for day-to-day operational responsibility for student assessment. Less frequently, an assessment officer (18%), a student affairs administrator (24%), or a faculty member (27%) is identified. These institutions are least likely to have an academic review officer in charge of day-to-day activities (6%). Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are more likely to have an institutional research officer, a student affairs administrator, or an assessment officer in charge of day-to-day responsibilities. Conversely, associate of arts institutions are less likely to have an academic affairs administrator, an academic review officer, or a faculty member in charge of day-to-day activities.

Reporting Relationship of Individual with Operating Responsibility for Student Assessment

Finally, institutions were asked to whom the individual with day-to-day operating responsibility for student assessment reports. Survey respondents selected from the following five offices: chief executive officer, chief academic officer, chief student affairs officer, institutional research officer, and academic review and evaluation officer. Figure 25 presents the responses from associate of arts and all institutions.

For associate of arts institutions, assessment managers responsible for day-to-day activities most often report to either the chief academic (43%) or chief executive (37%) officer. Hardly any report to the chief student affairs officer (13%), the institutional research officer (2%), or the academic review and evaluation officer (1%). Compared to all institutions, assessment managers at associate of arts institutions are more likely to report to the chief executive officer and less likely to report to the chief academic officer. This finding parallels the greater centralized authority typically found in associate of arts institutions.

Figure 25. Reporting Relationship of Individual with Operating Responsibility for Student Assessment Activities



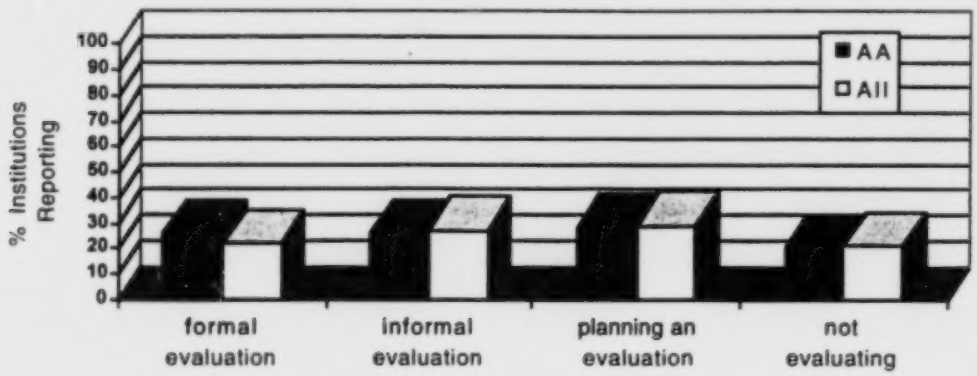
Evaluating the Student Assessment Process

The student assessment literature insists upon the importance of institutions regularly evaluating their assessment processes. Consequently, our survey inquired whether institutions have evaluated their student assessment plan or process and if so, what elements of their plan or process have been reviewed.

Status of Evaluation of Student Assessment Plan or Process

Institutions were asked whether they have conducted a formal evaluation, an informal evaluation, are currently developing plans for an evaluation, or are not planning to evaluate their assessment process. The results for associate of arts and all institutions are depicted in Figure 26.

Figure 26. Status of Student Assessment Evaluation



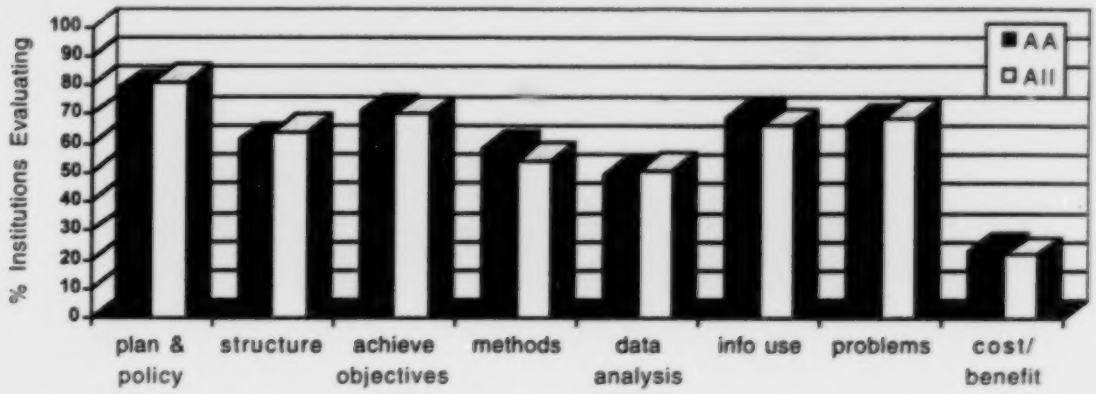
Slightly more than half (52%) of all associate of arts institutions have evaluated their assessment plan. Of these, half have conducted a formal evaluation and half have conducted an informal evaluation. If they have not yet evaluated their assessment plan, associate of arts institutions are likely to be developing an evaluation plan (28%) and slightly less likely to not be planning to evaluate their assessment process (20%). Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are slightly more likely to have conducted a formal evaluation and slightly less likely to have conducted an informal evaluation.

Elements of Student Assessment Evaluation

Those institutions that have formally or informally evaluated their student assessment process were asked which of eight elements were reviewed as part of the evaluation: student assessment plans and policies; structure and responsibility for student assessment; achievement of intended objectives for student assessment; reliability and validity of assessment instruments and methods; quality of data analysis; use of assessment information in institutional decision-making; problems encountered while conducting assessment; and the costs and benefits of student assessment. Results of this question for associate of arts and all institutions are shown in Figure 27.

Among the associate of arts institutions that evaluate their student assessment process, most take several elements of that process into consideration. They are most likely to assess their student assessment plan and policies (79%), the achievement of intended objectives for student assessment (71%), the use of assessment information in decision-making (69%), and the problems encountered while conducting assessment activities (67%). These institutions are less likely to evaluate the quality of data analysis (49%), the reliability and validity of assessment instruments and methods (58%), and the structure and responsibility for student assessment (61%). They are least likely to assess the costs and benefits of student assessment (23%). Compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are more likely to evaluate the reliability and validity of assessment instruments and methods, the use of assessment information in decision-making, the comparison of costs and benefits of student assessment, and the achievement of intended objectives for student assessment.

Figure 27. Elements of Student Assessment Evaluation



Summary Observations

The patterns described in this section indicate mixed institution-wide support for student assessment at associate of arts institutions. Although these institutions do not often mention student assessment in their mission statements and do not provide frequent institution-wide administrative or governing activities promoting student assessment, there are at least three indications of support. First, associate of arts institutions report a balance of external and internal purposes for conducting student assessment. This balance suggests that they are not solely responding to external mandates, but plan to make institutional improvements based on student assessment involvement and results. Second, respondents report that internal constituents are generally quite supportive of student assessment. Finally, most institutions have a planning committee for student assessment with broad representation of administrators and faculty.

Despite the indications of support for student assessment on associate of arts campuses, our survey results also suggest that many of these assessment processes are administrative, rather than faculty, driven. Although both faculty and administrators are fairly supportive of student assessment, administrators are more supportive. Furthermore, student assessment plans on associate of arts campuses are more likely to be formal and centralized than decentralized. Academic affairs administrators not only are most likely to chair the planning group and to have approval authority for assessment changes, they also are likely to have operating responsibility for day-to-day student assessment activities. If not an academic affairs staff member, an institutional researcher is more likely to have day to day operating responsibilities than is a faculty member.

The pattern of being more administratively than faculty driven is stronger for associate of arts institutions than it is for all institutions in our study. Associate of arts institutions are less likely to have a faculty governance committee addressing assessment and less likely to have a faculty member in charge of day-to-day responsibilities than are all institutions. Furthermore, at associate of arts institutions, the chief executive officer is more likely to have approval authority, the person in charge of day-to-day operating responsibilities is more likely to report to the chief executive officer, and the process itself is less likely to be decentralized than is the case in all institutions. Another difference between associate of arts and all institutions is that in associate of arts institutions student affairs staff and administrators appear to play a bigger role. They are more likely to be represented on student assessment committees and those who are in charge of day-to-day operating responsibilities are more likely to report to student affairs administrators than is the case in all institutions. A final difference is that associate of arts institutions are more likely to be engaging in student assessment to meet state mandates than are all institutions.

6. ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Reports on the existence of specific institutional practices and policies designed to promote student assessment management. Associate of arts institutions prefer unobtrusive practices and policies, such as distributing assessment results and providing access to student performance information as well as more obtrusive practices and policies such as using student assessment information in making either budget allocation or faculty evaluation and reward decisions.

A fourth domain in our conceptual framework is that of assessment management practices and policies providing mechanisms for managing the student assessment process and directing the ways in which student assessment information is used throughout the institution. Assessment management practices and policies are suggested in the literature as powerful means through which institutions can support student assessment and encourage the use of collected assessment information. Conceptual dimensions of assessment management practices and policies such as their comprehensiveness, consistency, and the extent to which they are employed within an institution are expected to influence internal support for student assessment and the likelihood of achieving institutional impacts from assessment information.

Our survey asked about specific institutional practices and policies promoting student assessment management. These items were factor analyzed to create nine comprehensive indices. In this section we will present results of these assessment management practice and policy indices, rather than of individual items.

Practices for Managing Student Assessment

What kinds of practices do institutions develop to manage and promote their student assessment process? We asked respondents about the existence of a variety of specific institutional practices to manage the student assessment process in four areas: academic resource allocation, student information systems, internal access to student assessment information, and distribution of assessment reports and studies. Scores for institutions for all specific practices in these four areas are presented in Appendix A. We used factor analysis to create indices of management practices in these four areas. Detailed information on these indices are provided in Appendix B Briefly, the four indices are:

1. Academic Budget Decisions: whether the institution's academic budget process compares academic units on student performance indicators and allocates resources competitively among them; or rewards them for improvement based on student performance indicators.

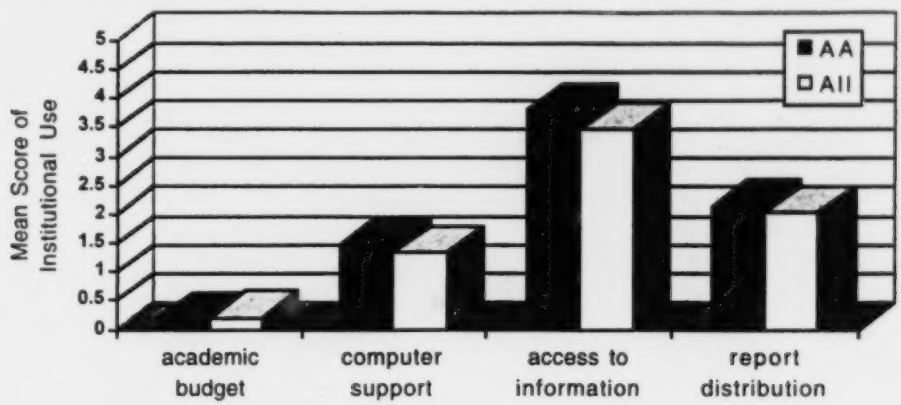
2. Computer Support: whether the institution has a computerized student information system that includes student performance indicators; tracks students from application through graduation; and is integrated with faculty, curricular, and financial databases.

3. Access to Student Information: whether assessment information on individual students is available to institutional researchers, assessment or evaluation professionals; senior academic administrators; department chairs or academic program administrators; student affairs professionals; and faculty advisors.

4. Distribution of Reports: whether assessment reports are regularly distributed to students, faculty, academic administrators, student affairs professionals, employers, and the general public.

Figure 28 presents information on these four indices. Each was originally measured on a different scale. For the purposes of this graph, we have translated each index to a scale of 0-5. Therefore, we can determine which of these practices is more prevalent in associate of arts and all institutions in our study.

Figure 28. Extent of Institutional Use of Assessment Management Practices



Scale: 0 = no practices in index used; 5 = all practices in index used.

Of these four assessment management practices, associate of arts institutions are most likely to provide access on individual students' performance to a number of internal constituents. For example, one of the items that comprises this index is whether student assessment data are accessible to institutional researchers — 83% of associate of arts respondents report that it is. If internal constituents have access to student assessment data, they should be able to make decisions based on these data, use the data to conduct studies, and even advise individual students based on their assessment information.

The next most prevalent student assessment management practice is distributing student assessment reports to internal and external constituents. This index is comprised of whether assessment information is distributed to six individuals. Most associate of arts institutions regularly distribute reports to academic administrators (84%), faculty (69%), and student affairs professionals (67%). Hardly any associate of arts institutions regularly distribute reports to students (19%), the general public (10%), or employers (7%).

Comparatively speaking, using computer information systems to manage the student assessment process is a less-often used practice. One of the items in this index is whether the institution has a student information system that tracks students from application through graduation. Less than half of associate of arts institutions (41%) report that they have such a system. Even fewer have either a system which includes student performance indicators or a system that is integrated with other institutional databases. These findings appear to contradict the literature that stresses that associate of arts institutions have advanced computerized systems to guide the student assessment process.

Using the budget to compare and reward units or personnel is practically non-existent. For example only 3% of institutions report that they reward academic units for improvement based on student performance indicators. Compared to all institutions in our study, associate of arts

institutions are more likely to use all of the assessment management practices except for academic budget allocations.

Policies Supporting and Promoting the Use of Student Assessment

While the previous section focused on practices used to manage student assessment, this section focuses on the policies used to both support student assessment and guide how the resulting data are incorporated into other institutional processes. We asked survey respondents about the extent to which they have developed a variety of specific institutional policies to support and promote student assessment in four areas: student involvement in assessment; professional development for student assessment; training for student affairs staff; faculty evaluation and rewards; and academic planning and review processes. Factor analysis produced five indices of student assessment policies; detailed information on these indices can be found in Appendix B. Briefly, these five indices are:

1. Student Involvement: extent to which the institution requires students to participate in student assessment activities, provides students with information on the purpose and uses of student assessment, and provides individual feedback regarding student performance results.

2. Professional Development: extent to which the institution provides funds for faculty to attend assessment conferences, faculty workshops or consultative services on student assessment, assistance to faculty to improve their use of student assessment, and workshops/seminars for academic administrators on assessment.

3. Student Affairs Training: extent to which the institution requires student affairs staff to receive training on assessment, and provides student assessment workshops for student affairs administrators.

4. Faculty Evaluation: extent to which the institution considers evidence of student performance in faculty evaluation for promotion; incorporates evidence of student performance into faculty evaluation for salary and merit; considers faculty scholarship on assessment in promotion, tenure, or salary reviews; considers faculty participation in assessment in promotion, tenure, or salary reviews; and recognizes faculty for effective use of assessment.

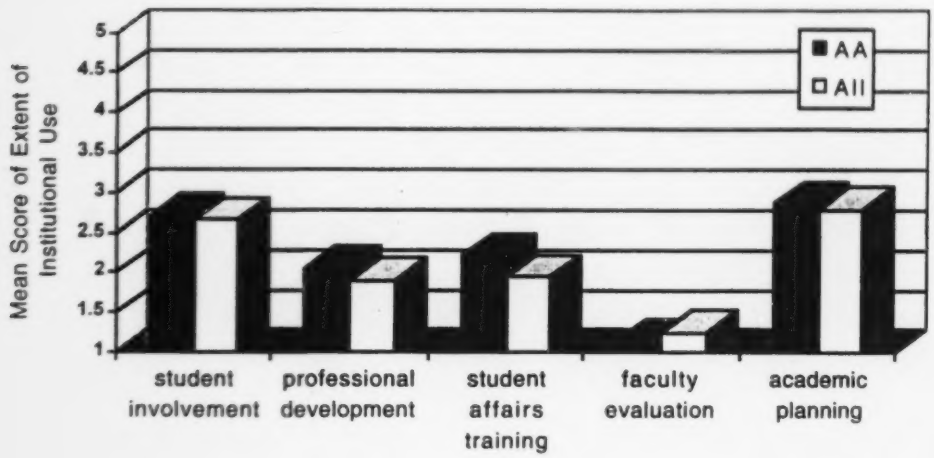
5. Academic Planning and Review: extent to which the institution incorporates student performance data into academic department or undergraduate program planning or review, general education or core curriculum review, course-level review and development, and review and planning for student academic support services.

Figure 29 presents the means for these five indices for associate of arts and all institutions. Scores for the individual items that comprise these indices are in Appendix A. Of the five assessment management policies presented in Figure 29, associate of arts institutions are most likely to incorporate student assessment data into academic planning and review processes. For example, respondents report that in some to many departments, student performance data are incorporated into undergraduate program planning or review—one of the items comprising this index. This finding provides evidence that associate of arts institutions are engaging in student assessment to improve undergraduate programs, a purpose they listed as moderate to very important.

Associate of arts institutions also make fairly extensive use of policies encouraging student involvement in assessment activities. For the three items that comprise this index, associate of arts institutions report that many departments require students to participate in assessment activities and some departments provide students with both information and feedback on student assessment.

Requiring participation and providing information on assessment purposes should increase student involvement, while providing individual feedback may improve student performance.

Figure 29. Extent of Institutional Use of Assessment Management Policies



1=not done at all; 2=done in a few depts,; 3=done in some depts; 4=done in many depts; 5=done in most depts.

Associate of arts institutions are slightly more likely to offer training and workshops for student affairs staff than they are to offer professional development on student assessment to faculty and academic administrators. Actually, when comparing the individual items that comprise these two indices (see Appendix A), only a few departments offer assistance such as paid leaves, stipends, and course reductions to faculty to improve their use of student assessment. Since the mean for this item is low, it lowers the mean for the professional development index. Offering funds for faculty to attend assessment conferences and offering student assessment workshops to faculty and academic administrators is actually more prevalent than offering workshops on student assessment for student affairs administrators.

Institutions are much less likely to evaluate and reward faculty based on student assessment participation or results. For example, respondents report that at their campus, less than a few departments consider faculty participation in assessment in promotion, tenure or salary reviews. Neither is student performance often used to reward or evaluate faculty. Associate of arts institutions responded that less than a few departments considered evidence of student performance in either promotion or salary and merit reviews. While these uses of student assessment data are fairly intrusive, one of the items in this index is more benign: publicly recognizing faculty for effective use of assessment. Nonetheless, associate of arts institutions using this strategy in only a few departments.

In comparison with all institutions in our study, associate of arts institutions are more likely to use all of these assessment management practices and policies except for evaluating and rewarding faculty. On the one hand, faculty promotion decisions in associate of arts institutions are often based on seniority, thus the finding that student assessment data are not used in this process as much as it is in other institutions is to be expected. On the other hand, however, if associate of arts institutions proclaim that they are student-oriented, one might believe that student assessment data would be a driving force in making decisions on promoting faculty.

Summary Observations

In section four we concluded that the assessment processes in associate of arts institutions appear to be administratively-driven. While the findings in this section do not contradict that conclusion, they do temper it somewhat. Administrators seem to be taking an unobtrusive approach in developing practices and setting policies. There is very little use of student assessment information in making either budget or faculty evaluation and reward decisions. Less obtrusive policies, such as distributing assessment results and providing access to student performance information are more prevalent. Associate of arts institutions are more likely to provide access to student assessment data than are all institutions. Also, compared to all institutions, associate of arts institutions are more likely to train student affairs staff on student assessment; this parallels the earlier finding that student affairs staff are more involved with student assessment at associate of arts institutions.

7. USES AND IMPACTS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Explores two important questions regarding how institutions use student assessment information in decision-making and the impact it has on institutions. Associate of arts institutions are not using student assessment information to any great degree in making academic decisions and report that student assessment has had little impact on either their internal processes or their external relationships.

As noted in our introduction, effective student assessment processes contribute to improvements in institutional and student performance. Consequently, two important questions in our research are: 1) how do institutions use student assessment information and 2) how does student assessment impact institutions?

From the literature we identified and focused on two critical dimensions: the use of student assessment information in academic decision making, and the internal and external impacts on the institution that have resulted from student assessment. Our survey included ten academic decision and fourteen institutional impact items. Institutions' scores for each use and impact item are presented in Appendix A and details on the indices are in Appendix B. We used factor analysis to create indices of uses and impacts in these five areas. Briefly, the five indices are:

1. Educational Decisions: the extent to which student assessment information is used in revising undergraduate academic mission or goals; designing or reorganizing academic programs or majors; designing or reorganizing student affairs units; allocating resources to academic units; modifying student assessment plans, policies, or processes; modifying general education curriculum; modifying student out-of-class learning experiences; creating or modifying distance learning initiatives; modifying teaching methods; and modifying student academic support services.

2. Faculty Decisions: the extent to which student assessment information is used in decisions on faculty promotion and tenure; and salary increases or rewards.

3. Faculty Impacts: whether student assessment has stimulated campus discussions of undergraduate education; contributed to faculty satisfaction; contributed to faculty interest in teaching; and led to changes in teaching methods used.

4. Student Impacts: whether student assessment contributes to student satisfaction; affects student retention or graduation rates; affects student grade performance; and affects student achievement on external examinations.

5. External Impacts: whether student assessment information affects student application or acceptance rates; allocation of state funding; evaluation from regional accreditation agency; private fund-raising results; success on grant applications; communications with external constituents; and institutional reputation or image.

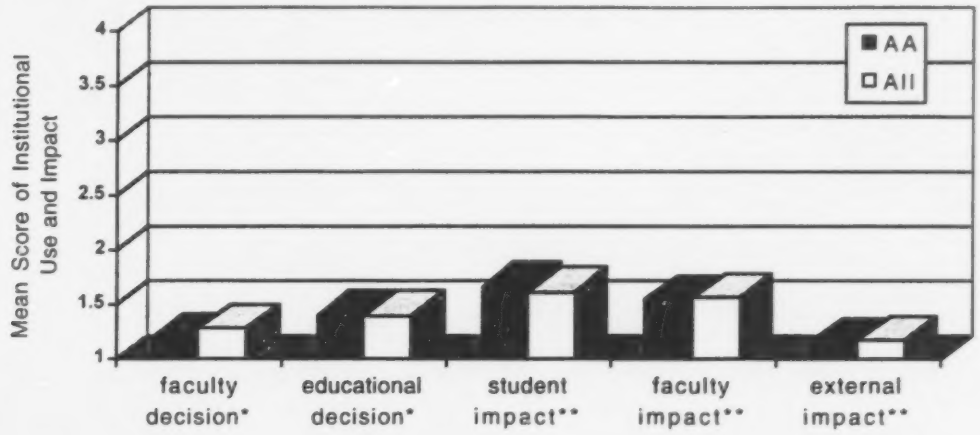
Figure 30 presents the means for these five indices for associate of arts and all institutions.

Uses in Academic Decisions

Associate of arts institutions are not likely to use student assessment data in making academic decisions. They are more likely to make educational decisions (1.40) than they are to make faculty related decisions (1.20) using student assessment information. Within the educational decision index, associate of arts institutions are most likely to use student assessment information to modify student assessment plans, policies, or processes (2.70). While this practice

is the most prevalent of all the items comprising the educational decisions index, we know from section five that only half of all responding associate of arts institutions report that they have evaluated their assessment plan or process, either formally or informally.

Figure 30. Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment Information



*Use scale: 1=no action or influence unknown, 2=action taken, data not influential; 3=action taken, data somewhat influential; 4=action taken, data very influential.
**Impact scale: 1=not monitored, do not know; 2=monitored, negative impact; 3=monitored, no known impact; 4=monitored, positive impact.

Not only is the faculty related decision index mean lower than the educational decision index mean, but the two items comprising the faculty index have the lowest means of any item in both of these indices. Associate of arts institutions report that they are not at all likely to use student assessment information in making decisions on either faculty promotion and tenure (1.36) or faculty salary increases or rewards (1.30). These findings provide further evidence for the finding that associate of arts institutions are not likely to have policies integrating student assessment data into faculty evaluation and rewards procedures.

Associate of arts institutions are not making great use of student assessment information in making either faculty or educational decisions. Compared to all institutions, they make even less use of student assessment information in faculty-related decisions, which parallels the finding that associate of arts institutions are less likely than all institutions to have policies integrating student assessment data into faculty evaluation and rewards procedures

Institutional Impacts

In terms of the impacts of student assessment information, associate of arts institutions are most likely to report that student assessment impacts students. Within this index, institutions are most likely to report that student assessment has impacted students' retention or graduation rates (2.24), and least likely to report that student assessment has impacted students' satisfaction (1.99). Many student assessment techniques require greater student effort and involvement, which may not lead to greater student satisfaction, especially in the short-run.

Associate of arts institutions are less likely to report that student assessment has impacted faculty. Within this index, institutions are most likely to report that student assessment has led to

changes in teaching methods used (2.41) and least likely to report that student assessment has led to greater faculty satisfaction (1.71). Again, assessing students may take more faculty energy and time which could lead to decreased satisfaction, especially if faculty are in the early learning stages.

Institutions were least likely to say that student assessment had impacted their external environment. The most commonly affected external domain is in the receipt of an evaluation from the regional accreditation agency (2.47).

Overall, associate of arts institutions report that student assessment has not greatly impacted either their internally- or their externally-oriented processes and functions. Compared to other institutions, associate of arts institutions are slightly more likely to report that their students are impacted by student assessment and slightly less likely to report that either their faculty or their external environment is affected by student assessment.

Summary Observations

Our study has revealed that associate of arts institutions are not using student assessment information to any great degree in making academic decisions. The greatest use of these data is in evaluating student assessment processes and we know from section five that only half of associate of arts institutions have evaluated their student assessment plan or process. Neither are associate of arts institutions reporting that student assessment has impacted either their internal processes or their external environment. These findings indicate that student assessment has not yet become entrenched in associate of arts institutions.

8. KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Internal influences, such as a mission emphasis on student assessment and excellence in undergraduate education; conducting assessment for internal improvement purposes; and providing a number of administrative and governance activities to support student assessment have more influence on associate of arts institutions' involvement with student assessment than do external forces. Engaging in student assessment for internal purposes; collecting more student data; making use of non-traditional assessment methods; involving a great number of internal constituents through professional development offerings; distributing reports of assessment results; and conducting studies to link students' performance to their interactions with the institution are related to more extensive uses of student assessment data in making academic decisions. Associate of arts institutions sponsoring more administrative and governance activities; using computer systems to support assessment; involving students; offering professional development opportunities to faculty and academic and student affairs staff; conducting further studies; and using the student assessment data they collect to evaluate faculty and plan and to review academic programs report that student assessment has had a greater impact on their internal processes and external relationships.

In the previous sections we have examined the external influences on, the institutional approaches to, organizational and administrative support for, management practices and policies regarding, and the institutional uses and impacts of student assessment. Even more important is understanding how these domains are related to student assessment making a difference in institutional performance. That is, which external influences, institutional approaches to assessment, organizational and administrative support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies are most likely to promote the use of and positive impacts from student assessment information?

In this section, we will examine three key relationships. First, we discuss how external influences affect an institution's approach to student assessment (the type and extent of their use of student assessment). Then we examine how external influences and institutional characteristics, approaches, support patterns, practices and policies affect an institution's use of student assessment data. Finally we examine how these domains lead to positive institutional impacts from student assessment. (The information in this section uses the indices discussed in previous sections. For detailed information on the indices, please refer to Appendix B.)

External and Internal Influences on Student Assessment Approaches

Are external forces more influential than internal forces in determining how associate of arts institutions approach student assessment? We used three multiple regression models to compare the influences of state characteristics related to student assessment, regional accreditation membership, and institution-wide support for student assessment on the extent of an institution's use of three approaches to student assessment: cognitive assessment (the extent to which data are collected on measures of students' cognitive performance); affective assessment (the extent to which data are collected on measures of students' affective development or performance); and post-college assessment (the extent to which data are collected on measures of students' post-enrollment performance). In these three models, the predictor variables stem from three domains: state assessment approach, accrediting region, and institution-wide support. Since we were examining the influence of states' assessment approaches, only public institutions were included in these

models. The predictor variables in this model are shown in Table 6 and defined in detail in Appendix B.

Table 6. The Influence of Institution-Wide Support, State Assessment Approach, and Accrediting Region on the Extent of Institutional Approach to Student Assessment for Public Associate of Arts Institutions

	Extent of Institutional Approach					
	Cognitive Assessment		Affective Assessment		Post-College Assessment	
	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2
R^2	**.21****		**.12****		**.19****	
Institution-Wide Support						
Mission Emphasis	.18**	.04	.13**	.02	.13**	.02
Administrative & Governance Activities	.13**	.02			.09*	.01
Administrator & Faculty Support						
Conduct for internal improvement	.22**	.09	.22**	.08	.16**	.04
Conduct for state						
Conduct for accreditation						
State Assessment Approach						
Authority Structure						
Form of State Assessment Initiative						
Common Indicators/Outcomes						
Accrediting Region						
Middle States					.14**	.01
North Central						
New England	-.08*	.01				
Northwest***						
Southern			.09*	.01	.10*	.01
Western	-.27**	.07	-.15**	.02	-.27**	.09

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

***Since "accrediting region" was a categorical variable, Northwest Accrediting Region was left out of this regression because its affect on cognitive competencies, based on ANOVA, was closest to the mean.

Cognitive Assessment

Table 6 shows the regression results for the relationship of the predictor variables in the three domains on the extent of institutional use of cognitive assessment. This model is fairly strong, explaining 21% of the variance in the dependent measure. Which of the variables has the most influence on whether associate of arts institutions assess students' cognitive abilities? Clearly the institution-wide patterns of support have more influence than the accrediting region, which in turn has more influence than the state. Within the institution-wide support domain, institutional emphasis on student assessment for internal improvement purposes is an important predictor of the extent of assessing students' cognitive abilities. Emphasizing student assessment in the mission statement and the extent of the institution's administrative and governance activities are also important. Finally, institutions in the Western and New England regional accrediting regions are less likely to assess students' cognitive abilities.

Affective Assessment

The second column in table 6 shows the regression results for the relationship of the predictor variables in the three domains to the extent of institutional use of affective assessment. This model is not as strong, explaining only 12% of the variance in the dependent measure. The extent of affective assessment conducted by associate of arts institutions is affected by both institution-wide support patterns and accrediting region. An internal purpose for conducting assessment and a mission emphasizing it are again both important influences. Institutions in the Western accrediting region are less likely to assess students' affective skills or growth, while institutions in the Southern accrediting region are more likely to do so.

Post-College Assessment

Finally, Table 6 presents the regression results for the relationship of the predictor variables in the three domains on the extent of institutional use of post-college assessment. This model is stronger than the affective model and comparable to the cognitive model, explaining 19% of the variance in the dependent measure. The influences on the extent of data collected on post-college outcomes fall into the same pattern—institution-wide support patterns and accrediting region have the greatest impact. As was the case with cognitive assessment, internal purpose, administrative and governing activities, and academic mission are all predictors of the extent to which associate of arts institutions collect post-college data. Institutions in the Middle States and Southern regions are more likely to collect post-college data, while institutions in the Western region are again less likely to collect data.

Institutional dynamics and accrediting region are the primary influences in all three of these student assessment approach models. Apparently, the drive for state-level accountability has not exceeded the influence of accreditation, and internal dynamics appear to be the driving force of all three approaches to student assessment.

Influences on Using Assessment Information in Academic Decisions

How do associate of arts institutions effectively promote and support the use of student assessment information in academic decision making? Within the domain of academic decisions, we created two indices reflecting the use of student assessment information: educational decision making and faculty decision making (these indices are described in detail in Appendix B). We used multiple regression to examine the influence of external forces, institutional size, institutional approach to student assessment, institution-wide support, and assessment management practices and policies on using student assessment information in both educational and faculty decisions. The predictor variables in this model are defined in detail in Appendix B. All institutions (public and private) were included in these models. Table 7 presents the results of these two regression models for associate of arts institutions.

Influence on Use of Assessment Information in Educational Decisions

The educational decisions model works well for associate of arts institutions, explaining 41% of the variance in the influence of student assessment data on educational decisions. While there are significant predictor variables from the domains of external influence, institutional approach, institution-wide support, and practices and policies, most of the significant variables are from either institutional approach or assessment management practices and policies.

Within the domain of assessment management practices and policies, if institutions train student affairs staff in assessment, distribute assessment reports widely throughout their institution, have computer systems in support of assessment, use assessment data to evaluate faculty, and involve students in the assessment process, they are more likely to use student

Table 7. The Influence of External Influences, Institutional Context, Institutional Approach, Institution-Wide Support, and Management Practices and Policies on Using Student Assessment Information in Educational and Faculty Decisions for Associate of Arts Institutions

	Educational Decisions		Faculty Decisions	
	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2
Adjusted R^2	**.41****		**.12****	
External Influences				
Middle States accrediting region				
North Central accrediting region			-.11**	.02
New England accrediting region				
Southern accrediting region	.12**	.02		
Western accrediting region				
State initiative for student assessment				
State approach to student assessment				
Accreditation influence				
Institutional Context				
Enrollment				
Control (1 = private, 2 = public)				
Institutional Approach to Student Assessment				
Cognitive assessment	.10*	.09		
Affective assessment				
Post-college assessment	.08*	.01		
Number of instruments				
Student-centered methods	.13**	.02		
External methods				
Total assessment studies	.16**	.05	.16**	.03
Institution-Wide Support for Student Assessment				
Mission emphasis				
Conduct for internal improvement	.12**	.03		
Conduct for accreditation			-.09*	.01
Conduct for state				
Administrative & governance activities				
Administrator & faculty support				
Formal centralized policy				
Institution-wide planning group			-.09*	.01
Conducted evaluation of assessment process				
Assessment Management Practices and Policies				
Academic Budget decisions				
Computer support	.10**	.01		
Access to information				
Distribution of reports	.14**	.02		
Student involvement	.08*	.01		
Professional development			.12**	.01
Student affairs training	.16**	.14		
Faculty evaluation[1]	.10**	.01	n/inc	
Academic planning & review[2]	n/inc		.15**	.05

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

[1]The factor "faculty evaluation" was not entered into the faculty decisions regression model, since many of the items comprising this factor were similar to items in the dependent factor.

[2]The factor "academic planning and review" was not entered into the educational decisions regression model, since many of the items comprising this factor were similar to items in the dependent factor.

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assessment information to make educational decisions. Within the approach domain, the more studies associate of arts institutions conduct on the link between students' performance and their educational experiences, the more student-centered methods institutions use in assessment, and the more cognitive and post-college data institutions collect, the more likely they are to use student assessment information to make educational decisions.

External influences do not play a large role in determining whether an institution uses student assessment information to make educational decisions. However, associate of arts institutions in the Southern region are more likely than institutions in other regional accreditation regions to use student assessment information to make educational decisions. Neither is institution-wide support an important indicator of using student assessment information in making educational decisions. Only one variable from this domain is significant—if associate of arts institutions conduct assessment for internal improvement purposes, they are more likely to use student assessment information to make educational decisions.

Influences on the Use of Assessment Information on Faculty Decisions

The faculty decisions model does not work as well for associate of arts institutions, explaining only 11% of the variance. This result is not surprising, given that most associate of arts institutions do not use student assessment information to make faculty decisions. In our regression model, six predictor variables are significant. Two are from the assessment management practices and policies domain. If institutions both use assessment data in academic planning and review processes and offer professional development opportunities on student assessment, they are more likely to use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions. There is one significant variable from the institutional approach domain: the more studies conducted by the institution on the link between students' performance and their experiences with the institution, the more likely the institution is to use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions.

There are three significant predictor variables in this model that have a negative influence on whether institutions use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions. Two of these variables are in the institution-wide support domain. If the institution has an institution-wide planning group for student assessment, they are less likely to use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions. Similarly, if institutions purport that they conduct assessment to meet accreditation mandates, they are less likely to use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions. Finally, our model demonstrates that institutions in the North Central region are less likely to use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions.

Influences of Student Assessment Information on Internal and External Institutional Performance

How does the use of student assessment information affect various internal and external institutional performance dimensions? In our survey, associate of arts institutions reported whether, and the extent to which, student assessment has impacted various aspects of faculty and student performance and relationships with their external environment. We created three indices reflecting the impact of student assessment information on faculty, students, and the institutions' external relations (these indices are described in detail in Appendix B and in section seven). We used multiple regression to examine the influences of external forces, institutional size, institutional approach to student assessment, institution-wide support, and assessment management practices and policies on the impact of student assessment information on students, faculty, and the institution's external environment. The predictor variables in this model are defined in detail in Appendix B. Table 8 presents the results of these three regression models for associate of arts institutions.

Table 8. The Influence of External Influences, Institutional Context, Institutional Approach, Institution-Wide Support, and Management Practices and Policies on Faculty, Student, and External Impacts for Associate of Arts Institutions

	Faculty Impacts		Student Impacts		External Impacts	
	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2
Adjusted R^2	**.28****		**.22****		**.23****	
External Influences						
Middle States accrediting region						
North Central accrediting region						
New England accrediting region						
Southern accrediting region						
Western accrediting region						
State initiative for student assessment						
State approach to student assessment	-.09*	.01				
Accreditation influence						
Institutional Context						
Enrollment						
Control (1 = public, 2 = private)						
Institutional Approach to Student Assessment						
Cognitive assessment						
Affective assessment						
Post-college assessment						
Number of instruments					.09*	.01
Student-centered methods	.09*	.01				
External methods						
Total assessment studies	.14**	.06	.14**	.03	.10*	.01
Institution-Wide Support for Student Assessment						
Mission emphasis						
Conduct for internal improvement						
Conduct for accreditation	-.12**	.01				
Conduct for state						
Administrative & governance activities	.17**	.04			.12**	.03
Administrator & faculty support						
Formal centralized policy						
Institution-wide planning group						
Conducted evaluation of assessment process	.08*	.01				
Assessment Management Practices and Policies						
Academic Budget decisions					.08*	.01
Computer support	.09*	.01	.15**	.04	.18**	.05
Access to information						
Distribution of reports						
Student involvement					.10*	.01
Professional development	.17**	.11				
Student affairs training			.13**	.02		
Faculty evaluation	.11*	.01	.11**	.01	.13**	.02
Academic planning & review	.10*	.02	.21**	.13	.13**	.10

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

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Influences on the Impact of Student Assessment Information on Faculty

What variables predict how extensive an impact student assessment will have on faculty and their activities? The first two columns of Table 8 show the statistically significant predictors of faculty impacts The model on faculty impacts is fairly strong, predicting 28% of the variance in the dependent measure. Institution-wide support for student assessment is key, according to the results of our regression model. If associate of arts institutions offer administrative and governance activities on student assessment and evaluate their assessment process, it is more likely that their assessment activities will impact faculty. Conversely, if associate of arts institutions conduct assessment to meet accreditation requirements, it is less likely that their assessment activities will impact faculty.

The assessment management practices and policies used by the institution are also important determinants of whether their assessment activities will affect faculty. Institutions that offer professional development, evaluate faculty using assessment information, use student assessment information in their academic planning and review process, and have computer systems to support assessment activities are more likely to report that their assessment activities have impacted faculty. How an institution approaches student assessment is also a key predictor in this model. Associate of arts institutions that conduct studies linking students' performance to their interactions with the institution and institutions that make use of student-centered methods of student assessment are likely to report that their assessment activities have impacted faculty. External influences are less important in this model. However, if an institution is located in a state that has a centralized approach to student assessment, meaning that it requires common indicators and outcomes, there is less likely to be an impact from engaging in student assessment on that institution's faculty.

Influences on the Impact of Assessment Information on Students

The middle two columns of Table 8 show which variables predict how extensive an impact student assessment will have on students. The model on student impacts is slightly weaker than the model on faculty impacts, predicting 21% of the variance in the dependent measure The assessment management practices and policies used by an associate of arts institution.appear to have the greatest influence on whether student assessment activities impact student performance. Institutions that use student assessment data in their academic planning and review process, have computer systems supporting student assessment, train student affairs staff in assessment, and evaluate faculty based on assessment information are likely to report that their assessment activities have impacted students. In terms of how institutions approach assessment, the more studies they conduct on linking students' performance to their interactions with the institution, the more likely student assessment is to impact students.

Influences on the Impact of Assessment Information on External Institutional Relations

Finally, the last two columns of Table 8 show which variables predict how extensive an impact student assessment will have on an institution's external relations. The model on external impacts is practically equal in strength to that of student impacts, predicting 23% of the variance in the dependent measure. All of the significant predictor variables in this model are internal variables. The strongest variables are from the assessment management practices and policies domain. Institutions that have computer systems to support assessment initiatives, use student assessment information in their academic planning and review processes, use student assessment data in evaluating faculty, involve students in the assessment process, and use student assessment data in making budget decisions are more likely to report that engaging in student assessment has had an external impact. Within the domain of institutional approach, the more studies institutions conduct on linking student performance to their institutional experiences and the more instruments institutions use to collect student data, the more likely the institutions are to report that engaging in

student assessment has had an external impact. Finally, within the domain of institution-wide support, institutions that offer more administrative and governance activities on student assessment are more likely to report that engaging in student assessment has impacted their external environment.

Summary Observations

In examining how internal and external forces compare in influencing associate of arts institutions' approaches to assessing students, it is clear that internal influences are much stronger. While different accrediting regions spur varying levels of engagement in collecting student assessment data, state policies and structures do not appear to be strong influences on the extent to which associate of arts institutions collect student assessment data. Three internal strategies are particularly important in determining the extent of student data collected: emphasizing student assessment and excellence in undergraduate education in the mission statement, conducting assessment for internal improvement purposes, and providing a number of administrative and governance activities on student assessment.

If associate of arts institutions are to benefit from engaging in student assessment, they should not only be collecting student data, but also using these data to make academic decisions. Although institutions in different accrediting regions vary in terms of how much they use assessment information in making academic decisions, external influences in general are extremely limited. Institutions that use student assessment data in making academic decisions commit to their assessment process—evidenced by the strategy of engaging in student assessment for internal purposes, rather than to meet accrediting requirements, and by the existence of computer systems in support of assessment. These institutions also collect more student data and to make use of non-traditional methods of assessing students. They also involve a great number of internal constituents through their professional development offerings, including student affairs staff and students themselves. Finally, they go beyond merely collecting student assessment data to distributing reports of assessment results and conducting studies on the link between students' performance and their interactions with the institution.

If engaging in student assessment makes a difference in associate of arts institutions, they should report that it is impacting their internal processes and external relations. External influences were not important predictors of student assessment impacts with one exception: if the institution conducted assessment to meet accreditation requirements, they were not likely to report that their assessment activities had an impact. Institutions at which the assessment process has had an impact have committed support to the assessment process through administrative and governance activities and through creating computer systems to support the assessment process. They also use diverse and extensive collection methods—both traditional and non-traditional. They involve students in the assessment process and they offer professional development opportunities on student assessment to faculty and student and academic affairs staff. Finally, they go beyond merely collecting assessment data to both conducting further studies and to using the data they collect. They use these data to evaluate faculty, plan and review academic programs, and make budget decisions.

9. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: RESEARCH RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for associate of arts institutions based on the results of our research are outlined in this section. This study and monograph highlight the importance of viewing student assessment from a critical institutional perspective and underscore three important realities: 1) for student assessment to enhance student, faculty, academic, and institutional performance, it has to be viewed as an institutional process, not just a series of student assessment activities; 2) a great deal of organizational, administrative, and academic activity is or can be invested in initiating, managing, and using student assessment; and 3) that a systematic look at those institutional activities can enhance an institution's ability to plan for and use student assessment effectively.

Student Assessment: A Critical Institutional Perspective

The intent of our survey and of this monograph is to highlight the importance of viewing student assessment from a critical institutional perspective and to underscore three important realities: 1) for student assessment to enhance student, faculty, academic, and institutional performance, it has to be viewed as more than just a series of student assessment activities; 2) a great deal of organizational, administrative, and academic activity is or can be invested in initiating, managing, and using student assessment; and 3) a systematic look at those institutional activities can enhance an institution's ability to use student assessment effectively.

The data reported in this survey provide a national profile of what associate of arts institutions are currently doing to support and promote the use of student assessment. This evidence provides insight into the activities institutions are doing extensively, those which merit greater attention, and those which make a difference in improving institutional performance. We begin with a summary of our research findings and recommendations concerning specific assessment activities conducted within associate of arts institutions. Then we discuss how associate of arts institutions can use the Institutional Support for Student Assessment (ISSA) inventory and the Framework for Institutional Support for Student Assessment (Figure 1 of this monograph) as a guide for examining their student assessment process and functions. We conclude by suggesting that the results of the national survey used in conjunction with institutional self-examination can serve as the basis for redesigning or planning a student assessment process which can enhance an institution's academic performance.

Student Assessment in Associate of Arts Institutions: Results and Recommendations from the National Survey

Institutions that have committed resources to assessing the development of their undergraduate student assessment activities should be able to use the student assessment data they collect in organizational decision-making and to document impacts from their assessment activities. Associate of arts institutions that are engaging in undergraduate student assessment but do not feel that they are profiting from the process as much as they could be may want to adopt the strategies of institutions that have reported using and being positively impacted by assessment information. Our research has demonstrated that most associate of arts institutions have made only limited use of student assessment data and given little attention to monitoring impacts from assessment. However, they have adopted a wide variety of student assessment approach measures, institution-wide activities supporting student assessment, and assessment management practices and policies. Our research shows that external influences do play some role in encouraging institutions to conduct and use student assessment, but there is much that institutions themselves can do to initiate, support, and benefit from their undergraduate student assessment efforts. Our research

identified strategies from the domains of student assessment approach, institution-wide support for student assessment, and assessment management practices and policies that lead to greater institutional uses and impacts from undergraduate student assessment information. In the following sections, we highlight the student assessment activities that associate of arts institutions are currently engaging in to a great extent, the activities that they may want to augment, and the activities that are critical to enhancing the use of student assessment data in academic decisions leading to positive institutional impacts.

Student Assessment Uses and Impacts

If institutions are benefiting from their student assessment process, they should report that they are using resulting assessment data in academic decisions and that the use of these data has a positive impact on both internal processes and external relationships. In this section, we describe the extent to which associate of arts institutions are using student assessment data and the extent to which these data have had an impact on the institution. Suggestions for increasing institutional uses and impacts of student assessment data are outlined in the following sections.

Uses of Student Assessment Information. Most associate of arts institutions are not using student assessment data to make academic decisions. Our study did not attempt to discern why institutions are not making more extensive use of these data. Perhaps institutional decision-makers do not have sufficient data to inform decisions concerning institutional policies and practices. This may be particularly so if assessment data collection focuses on student inputs (e.g., basic college-readiness skills or academic intentions of entering students) or outputs (e.g., graduation or employment rates of exiting students) without attempting to measure changes in student performance or development, or without examining the relationship between student performance and development and facets of their experiences within the institution (e.g., course-taking patterns, financial aid, advising policies). Assessment data use may also be limited if institutions have not created a formal mechanism for incorporating this data into decision-making processes. Associate of arts institutions should examine why they are not making more use of student assessment data. For example, is the type of data being collected not useful for informing decisions? Are there concerns about data quality? Is assessment data not easily accessible or not widely distributed to decision makers? Raising questions of this nature will assist institutions in understanding how they may increase the use of assessment information in decision making.

Impacts of Student Assessment Information. Similarly, associate of arts institutions are reporting very minimal impacts on students, faculty, or their external relationships from student assessment data. For the most part, we found that associate of arts institutions are simply not monitoring whether student assessment information has had an impact. Such monitoring is important if institutions are to evaluate the institutional benefits of engaging in student assessment. The remainder of this report suggests institutional practices, policies, and strategies that may promote institutional uses and impacts of student assessment data.

External Influences

External influences, such as state and accreditation requirements, can be strong motivators for institutions to engage in student assessment. In addition, a variety of postsecondary organizations and external funding sources offer support for institutions' assessment programs. This section describes these influences on associate of arts institutions and provides suggestions for deriving the most benefit from these external relationships.

State Influences. Most of the associate of arts institutions that responded to our survey are public institutions and are under the purview of a state mandate for student assessment. Most of these institutions responded that they were involved in developing the details of the state mandate. However, some institutions were not involved in this development. Where such opportunities

exist, institutions should try to be involved with planning at the state level in order to craft mandates that are fair, practical, and beneficial to the institutions. Institutions located in states where the assessment mandate requires common indicators and outcomes are less likely to report that student assessment has impacted their faculty. Perhaps in these states, the mandates have omitted a link between student assessment and faculty impacts. If associate of arts institutions desire that their faculty be impacted by their student assessment process yet fall under a state mandate that requires common indicators and outcomes for all public institutions (or even all associate of arts institutions) in the state, they may want to work with the state to craft indicators that are more relevant for their individual institutions and faculty.

Accreditation Influences. Just as most associate of arts institutions are subject to a state mandate for student assessment, most have completed a regional accreditation review requiring undergraduate student assessment. In fact, for most associate of arts institutions, accreditation requirements were either an important reason to initiate student assessment or an incentive to increase involvement in assessing students. Accreditation agencies apparently have a strong influence on associate of arts institutions' student assessment activities. Some regional accreditation associations have more influence on institutions' student assessment activities than do others. For example, institutions in the Western accrediting region collect less student assessment data than do institutions in the Southern accrediting region. Institutions should be cognizant of the influence of their accrediting region. While it is important to respond to accreditation requirements, our research shows that if responding to accreditation requirements is the major purpose for engaging in student assessment activities, student assessment information is less likely to be used in making faculty-related decisions or to impact faculty. Perhaps when assessment is conducted mainly to satisfy external requirements, it is less likely to affect those in the classroom. If associate of arts institutions want their assessment information to affect faculty, they should be quite sure that they are engaging in student assessment for internal, as well as external, purposes.

Other External Influences. In addition to state mandates and accreditation requirements, there are other externally-oriented considerations bearing on associate of arts institutions' student assessment activities. Many associate of arts institutions have made use of conferences and publications on student assessment provided by professional and regional accreditation associations. Although a variety of external agencies and programs offer grants to improve or support institutions' assessment practices, the majority of associate of arts institutions have not received such grants. In addition, all institutions in our study are more likely to receive FIPSE and private foundation or corporate grants than are associate of arts institutions. Associate of arts institutions interested in augmenting their assessment efforts may want to explore these opportunities for external support.

Institutional Approach to Student Assessment

Institutional approach to student assessment refers to institutional decisions regarding the collection and analysis of student assessment information. Dimensions along which assessment approaches can be differentiated include: the type and extent of student assessment data collected; the methods used to collect assessment data; and the analyses conducted and reported for collected data. Associate of arts institutions have adopted a variety of approaches to collecting and analyzing student assessment data. This section describes these approaches and makes suggestions for adopting assessment approaches that will lead to uses and impacts of student assessment information.

Type and Extent. Most associate of arts institutions emphasize the collection of certain types of student assessment data including basic college-readiness skills, academic intentions, academic progress, satisfaction, and post-college vocational and educational outcomes. While collecting these data is important, they reflect a measurement of student placement, student satisfaction, and movement through the educational process, rather than cognitive or affective

development. Associate of arts institutions collect less extensive information on their students' higher order skills, general education competence, competence in the major, vocational skills, personal and affective development, and involvement with the institution. Collecting these types of data, particularly at more than one point in time during students' involvement with the institution, would provide associate of arts institutions with more substantive data concerning students' cognitive and affective growth. Not only will collecting such data provide a richer understanding of student growth, but our research has shown that the more data institutions collect, the more likely they are to use this assessment data in making educational decisions. Associate of arts institutions should review the type and extent of assessment data being collected and, where needed, broaden and deepen these collection efforts.

Assessment Methods. When collecting student assessment data, associate of arts institutions as a whole tend to use tests and other written instruments. Some units or departments within associate of arts institutions make use of less traditional assessment methods such as observations of student performance; student portfolios or comprehensive projects; student performance in capstone courses; student interviews or focus groups; employer interviews or focus groups; alumni interviews or focus groups; and interviews with withdrawing students. Associate of arts institutions should increase the use of these alternative measures of collecting student assessment data in order to gather data that is not accessible via more traditional tests and surveys. Such alternative measures also tend to involve faculty more in the measurement process through participation in designing and administering these methods, and interpreting the data collected. Our research found that the more extensive the data collection methods an institution employed, in terms of using a greater number of instruments and tests and more student-centered methods, the more likely the institution is to use the data to make educational decisions and to report that the data has impacted both faculty and external relationships. Associate of arts institutions should encourage or support extensive and alternative data collection methods within their units if they want the resulting student assessment data to be useful and to have a positive impact on their institution.

Assessment Studies. Institutions in our study reported whether they examine aspects of the institution that affect students' performance. Slightly more than half of associate of arts institutions do conduct such studies. The most frequently conducted studies examine student financial aid and/or concurrent employment; admissions standards or policies; student course-taking patterns; exposure to different instructional or teaching methods; and academic advising patterns. These studies are important if institutional decision-makers are to understand how their decisions affect students' performance. Our research has found that institutions that conduct more studies are more likely to report that they use student assessment information in making both educational and faculty-related decisions and that this assessment information has impacted their students, faculty, and external relationships. Clearly, conducting such studies is extremely important and there is room for associate of arts institutions to carry out more of them.

Institution-Wide Assessment Support Strategy

Associate of arts institutions have developed a variety of strategies to support their student assessment processes such as including student assessment in the academic mission statement; developing internal purposes for engaging in assessment; sponsoring institution-wide activities to promote involvement in and support for assessment; adopting an institutional plan or policy for student assessment; establishing processes and structures for planning and coordinating assessment; and evaluating the assessment process. This section describes the strategies associate of arts institutions use to support student assessment and provides suggestions regarding specific strategies that enhance the likelihood of achieving institutional benefits from student assessment information.

Mission Emphasis. One way to determine the degree of institutional support for an activity is to examine whether the activity is emphasized in the mission statement. While most associate of arts institutions emphasize excellence in undergraduate education, only half describe intended outcomes for student assessment and only about one-fifth reference student assessment. If student assessment is indeed a core value of the institution, this value should be communicated via the mission statement. Our research found that institutions that emphasize assessment in their mission statements are more likely to collect a greater extent of student assessment data.

Assessment Purposes. Similarly, support for assessment can be detected by understanding an institution's purpose for engaging in student assessment. Associate of arts institutions report that accreditation mandates and improving undergraduate education are both very important purposes for engaging in assessment. This finding is encouraging, as it indicates that institutions both are aware of external demands and are purposefully engaging in student assessment to improve internal processes. Associate of arts institutions should continue to maintain such a balance, especially as our research found that institutions that conduct assessment for internal improvement purposes collect more assessment data and report that they use this data to make educational decisions.

Institution-Wide Activities. Another measure of support for student assessment is the number of institution-wide administrative and governance activities used to promote assessment. Approximately half of associate of arts respondents report that they offer annual forums on student assessment; provide regular workshops for academic and student affairs administrators; and have a faculty governance committee that regularly addresses assessment issues. While these efforts are a good start, they are only adopted by half of our respondents. Furthermore, our results show that associate of arts institutions seldom provide incentives or rewards to administrators or academic units for engaging in or using the results of student assessment. Associate of arts institutions could increase the use of such regular activities if they want to demonstrate institution-wide support for assessing students. Not only will offering such activities demonstrate support, but our research found that institutions that offer more administrative and governance activities collect more student assessment data and report that these data have an impact on both faculty and their external relationships.

Administrative and Faculty Support. Our survey also asked respondents to describe their opinion of the level of support for student assessment given by various internal constituents. Only academic affairs administrators were described as very supportive. Does this finding indicate a feeling of ambivalence toward assessing students? Even the chief executive officer was described, on average, as being only somewhat supportive of student assessment. If the chief executive officer is not very supportive of student assessment, there are bound to be difficulties in promoting it, funding it, and rewarding people for engaging in it. Furthermore, if faculty governance committees are only somewhat supportive of student assessment, faculty members may not fully engage in assessing students. Periodically measuring degrees of internal support for student assessment may be a useful means for associate of arts institutions to gauge the effectiveness of efforts to promote assessment.

Institutional Plans and Policies for Assessment. The types of plans and policies institutions develop for assessing students are telling of their support for student assessment. Virtually all responding associate of arts institutions have some type of plan or policy for assessing students. Half of associate of arts institutions have developed a formal plan that specifies assessment activities for all academic programs. The next most popular form is a formal guidance policy that identifies institution-wide activities to be conducted by a central office or committee. Apparently associate of arts institutions favor centralized plans and policies. The fact that they have plans and policies is encouraging as it indicates that they have devoted time and attention to the student assessment process.

Planning and Coordinating Assessment. Furthermore, most associate of arts institutions have some type of planning group for student assessment. Typically, an academic affairs administrator is responsible for chairing these groups. In addition to academic administrators, most of these groups are staffed by faculty, student affairs administrators, and institutional researchers. This broad representation of constituents is a sign that there is wide input on student assessment issues. However, only one-third of these planning groups has a student representative. Associate of arts institutions may want to consider involving students in these groups. Student representation increases the likelihood of understanding how students feel about student assessment. Once institutions understand how students view assessment, they can attempt to overcome student objections to participating in assessment activities. As associate of arts institutions consider including students in the assessment planning and coordination process, they should be aware that our research found that institutions that have a planning group are less likely to use student information to make faculty decisions.

Evaluation of Assessment Process. Whether an institution has evaluated its assessment plan or policy is often an indication of the importance it accords student assessment as an institutional activity. Half of associate of arts institutions have evaluated their plan or policy for student assessment. All associate of arts institutions should consider evaluating their plans and policies in order to better understand whether their plan is meeting its objectives and whether the effort expended to assess students is benefiting the institution. Furthermore, those institutions that have evaluated their assessment process report that their faculty have been impacted by student assessment data.

Assessment Management Practices

Assessment management practices refer to specific practices intentionally devised by institutions to manage their student assessment efforts. Four specific areas of practice were identified as potential influences on student assessment: academic resource allocation, student information systems, internal access to student information, and distribution of assessment reports and studies. This section describes the practices used by associate of arts institutions and provides suggestions for using these practices to maximize uses and impacts of student assessment information.

Academic Budget. Associate of arts institutions are not likely to allocate budgetary resources based on assessment engagement or results. If this practice was augmented, institutional leaders could demonstrate that they consider student assessment to be a high priority. In addition, our research found that institutions that do allocate resources based on assessment engagement or results are more likely to report that their student assessment information has a positive impact on their external relations. Perhaps external founders are stipulating that institutions use assessment results to hold individuals and departments accountable.

Computer Support. Currently, fewer than half of associate of arts institutions report that they have a student information system that tracks students from application through graduation. Even fewer have either a system which includes student performance indicators or an integrated database. Along with improving the management of student assessment data, creating relational databases with student assessment information that can be linked to other organizational data should facilitate studying the link between students' performance and their institutional interactions. Our research found that institutions benefit greatly from having computerized systems to support and manage the assessment process. These institutions report that they use their student assessment information to make educational decisions and that this information has had a positive impact on faculty, students, and their external relationships. Associate of arts institutions should increase their use of such systems; doing so is clearly a very important endeavor.

Access to Assessment Information. Providing broad access to student assessment information is important if institutions want their constituents to make use of the information. Most associate of arts institutions do provide broad internal access to student assessment information. Providing such access makes it easier for internal personnel to intervene with or give feedback to students regarding their performance.

Assessment Report Distribution. Not only is providing access to information helpful in making use of assessment information, but distributing reports of studies done using student assessment data is also important. The more people are aware of student assessment activities and results, the more likely they will be to use the information in their own decision making. While most associate of arts institutions regularly distribute reports to traditional internal constituents such as faculty, academic administrators, and student affairs professionals, hardly any associate of arts institutions regularly distribute reports to students, the general public, or employers. Associate of arts institutions should increase the number of constituents who receive their reports. Our research found that the greater the number of constituents who receive student assessment reports, the more likely the institution is to use student assessment data to make educational decisions.

Assessment Management Policies

Assessment management policies refer to institutional policies devised to both support student assessment and to direct the use of student assessment information. Five content dimensions of assessment management policies were examined: student involvement in assessment; professional development on assessment for faculty and academic administrators; training in assessment for student affairs personnel; faculty evaluation and rewards; and academic planning and review processes. This section describes the use of these policies by associate of arts institutions and provides suggestions regarding policies that maximize institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information.

Student Involvement. While associate of arts institutions report that many of their departments require students to participate in assessment activities, they also report that only some departments provide students with both information about and feedback on their assessments. Explaining the importance of assessment and providing individual feedback to students should not only lead to improved uses and impacts of assessment information, but increase students' participation in assessment activities while improving their performance. Our research found that the more the institution involves students in the assessment process, the more likely the institution is to use assessment data to make educational decisions and the more likely this data is to impact the institution's external relationships.

Professional Development. Associate of arts institutions do offer professional development on student assessment to their faculty and academic administrators. Their professional development policies, however, are more likely to involve activities that do not significantly affect time in the classroom (for example, funds to attend assessment conferences or workshops on assessment) than those that involve greater expenditure of administrative and faculty time (for example, paid leaves or course reduction to develop or improve assessment practices). While understandable from a fiscal perspective, this emphasis on providing professional development support of shorter duration may not provide faculty with adequate time to learn about or develop new assessment techniques. Offering a variety of professional development opportunities should increase the level of faculty and administrative involvement in and support for student assessment. Our research found that those institutions that offer extensive professional development are more likely to use their student assessment information to make decisions regarding faculty and this information is more likely to have an impact on their faculty. Associate of arts institutions should review and consider increasing the array of professional development opportunities on student assessment that are offered to their academic personnel.

Student Affairs Training. When designing professional development opportunities, associate of arts institutions should not neglect their student affairs personnel. Involving student affairs staff in student assessment may lead to greater student involvement as the staff have opportunities for promoting assessment activities while they work with students. Currently, associate of arts institutions are including student affairs personnel in their professional development initiatives — a policy decision that should benefit these institutions. Our research found that those institutions that provide student assessment training to their student affairs personnel are more likely to use assessment information in making educational decisions and to report that this assessment information has had an impact on their students.

Faculty Rewards and Evaluation. Associate of arts institutions rarely have policies that include assessment-related criteria in faculty evaluation and rewards. Although the wisdom of this linkage has been the cause of much debate in the assessment literature, our research found that associate of arts institutions that do include assessment-related criteria in their faculty evaluation and reward processes are more likely to use assessment information to make educational decisions and to report that this information has impacted their students, faculty, and external relationships. Institutions may understandably be reluctant to tie faculty evaluation and rewards to assessment results or indicators of student performance, but there are many other options to consider. For example, institutions can include criteria concerning faculty scholarship in assessment, evidence of using assessment to improve teaching and learning, or participating in assessment decision-making in reviewing and evaluating faculty.

Academic Planning and Review. Another use for student assessment information is in planning and reviewing academic programs and courses. Associate of arts institutions currently make fairly extensive use of student assessment information in their academic planning and review processes, particularly in reviewing academic programs. Our research found that using student assessment information in academic planning and review is instrumental to gaining positive impacts from the assessment process. The more institutions use assessment information in academic planning and review, the more likely they are to use assessment information to make faculty decisions and the more likely they are to report that this assessment information positively impacts faculty, students, and their external relationships.

Inventorying the Institutional Student Assessment Process

Regardless of an institution's history of and support for student assessment, it is important to take stock of what the institution is currently doing. The Institutional Framework presented in section two (Figure 1 of this monograph) provides a comprehensive perspective for such an examination. The Institutional Support for Student Assessment (ISSA) inventory included as Appendix A provides a useful quasi-objective instrument for identifying the specific dimensions and activities associated with the student assessment process.

Institutions are encouraged to identify a team of faculty and administrators most knowledgeable about and involved with student assessment to examine their institution's activities on all the dimensions in the ISSA inventory. While most items are objective (e.g., which types of measures are being used and how extensively), the actual pattern on campus may not be widely known. Other items are more subjective (e.g., purposes for conducting student assessment) and can provide the basis for good discussion.

This inventory of the institutional student assessment process then can be compared with national data for associate of arts institutions which were presented in Appendix A and summarized in the previous sections of this monograph. This inventorying and comparison process may highlight activities, policies, and practices not currently used; identify areas needing greater attention; or focus on inconsistencies in patterns of activity (e.g. inconsistencies between stated purposes for student assessment and actual uses of student assessment data in academic decisions).

For institutions with an extensive history of involvement with student assessment, such an inventory may serve as a useful basis for identifying new activities to be undertaken, for improving their existing activities and processes, for identifying issues or controversies that have been avoided, or for redesigning processes that may not be worth the current expenditure of effort and resources. For institutions with less experience with student assessment, the inventory may identify existing activities on which to build or help focus attention in the institution on the importance of student assessment in improving institutional performance. In either type of institution, the inventory and self evaluation process should help both to focus faculty and administrative attention on the importance of viewing student assessment as an institutional process and to deal with it more systematically — linking the various domains of activity with institutional improvement.

Planning for Student Assessment

Student assessment in most higher education institutions has emerged, often sporadically, over the past decade due to the need to respond to an accreditation self study, a new state mandate, an academic administrator who promoted it, a faculty group who embraced it for their unit, or an institutional researcher or program review officer who was engaged in studies of student performance. While, according to the data in this report, some institutions are beginning to develop a plan or policy for student assessment or create a group responsible for it, there is little evidence of systematic planning that links the student assessment approach to external demands and to internal institutional governance and management patterns; develops the organizational and administrative activities, practices, and policies to support it; and then uses the data for academic decisions and monitors their impact. Clearly there are significant institutional differences and complex issues to be addressed if student assessment is to have positive effects. These deserve some systematic, planned attention. The results of an institutional inventory can provide the basis for such an effort.

While we do not advocate a cookbook or standardized approach to planning for student assessment (each institution needs to design its own planning approach to reflect its own governance and leadership styles and traditions), the Institutional Framework (Figure 1 in section two) and the institutional inventory provide a useful basis for redesigning or planning a student assessment process. Using that self-assessment, the following are planning issues that need to be addressed:

External Influences

1. What is the nature of our state assessment process? How is it formulated and what are its requirements/implications for us?

2. What are the accreditation requirements for our institutional and key professional accreditation bodies?

3. What do some of our primary external constituents expect of our graduates?

4. What are sources of support (educational, financial, technical) for our student assessment efforts?

Institution-Wide Support Patterns

1. What emphasis is placed on student assessment in our mission statements? What are the intended purposes of our institution's assessment efforts?

2. What institution-wide administrative, governance, and academic activities support student assessment? Who are key leadership support groups and how are they involved?

3. What is the nature of our institution-wide plan or policy for student assessment? The role and membership of a coordinating or planning body? And the pattern of authority and responsibility for administering the process?

4. Is the student assessment process to be evaluated? By whom? Using what criteria?

Approaches to Student Assessment

1. Should we have an institution-wide or decentralized (by academic unit) approach to student assessment?

2. What types of measures are to be used? How widely? At what points in time?

3. What types of instruments and methods are appropriate? What technical or professional support does that require?

4. What studies of the influence of students' educationally related experiences on their performance are to be done? What reports of student performance are to be prepared and distributed?

Assessment Management Practices and Policies

1. What assessment management practices exist to guide student assessment? (i.e., resource allocation, information systems, data access, and report distribution practices.)

2. What institutional policies promote the use of student assessment? (i.e., policies on student involvement, professional development, student affairs training, faculty evaluation, and academic planning.)

Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment

1. How will we assure use of student assessment information on educationally- and faculty-related academic decisions?

2. How will we monitor the impact of student assessment on our students, faculty, academic and instructional patterns, and on our external relationships?

While planning for student assessment may not resolve all of these questions, they should be addressed as should issues of the balance between the effort and resources required to maintain the institution's student assessment process and the educational and institutional benefits. When planning is combined with inventorying, these two processes can become a powerful mechanism for understanding and improving institutional student assessment endeavors. Inventorying existing student assessment processes is a first step toward understanding the nature and extent of an institution's student assessment activities. This can be followed by a planning process that considers the recommendations for associate of arts institutions that were presented in this section. Using a systematic planning approach should increase the likelihood that student assessment will contribute to improved institutional performance.

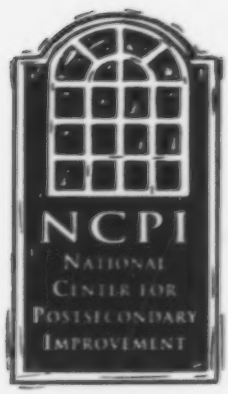
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Associate of Arts Institutions

Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Associate of Arts Institutions

For The Research Program on
Institutional Support for Student Assessment



NCPI - Project 5.2
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259

An Introduction to the ISSA

The *Institutional Support for Student Assessment Inventory* (ISSA) was developed as part of a national research program examining the *Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment* for the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI). The ISSA is designed as an institutional inventory of the organizational and administrative practices that have been designed and implemented to support the use of *student assessment* on your campus.

Institutional Support Practices are those organized activities, policies, and procedures that your institution has intentionally designed to enhance the practice of student assessment. *Student Assessment refers to those activities focused on measuring dimensions of student performance other than traditional end of course grading.*

This national survey is designed to identify institutional support practices for undergraduate student assessment. The project also examines the factors influencing the adoption of various support practices and how those practices enhance the impact of student assessment for institutional improvement.

We understand that being selected for this survey will require a commitment of time to complete and we appreciate your involvement. This instrument is also intended as an institutional self-assessment inventory to facilitate examination of your institution's own organizational and administrative practices which support student assessment. We encourage each institution to use the survey in this manner. You will receive a summary report of survey responses to all compare with your own institutional profile.

Completing the ISSA

The main purpose is to obtain a profile of your institution's current approach to undergraduate student assessment and its support practices. The inventory may be completed by one individual or group of individuals who are most familiar with the patterns of undergraduate student assessment on your campus. It should take less than one hour to complete.

- Please keep in mind that the questions refer to *undergraduate education* at your institution.
- Respond to each item in the questionnaire to the best of your knowledge.

The questionnaire is coded to allow follow up only. Individual institutions will not be identified in any analyses or reports.

Return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed return envelope. Any questions concerning the survey can be addressed to the following:

National Center for Postsecondary Improvement Project 5.2
School of Education
University of Michigan
610 E. University, Room 2339
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259
Phone: 734-647-2464
Fax: 734-936-2741
Email: ncpi.proj52@umich.edu

Marvin W. Peterson, Project Director

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I. Institutional Approach to Student Assessment

A. Type, Extent and Timing of Student Assessment

We are interested in your institution's routine practices of collecting different types of undergraduate student performance data, the extent to which they are collected, and when they are collected. For each of the following content types of undergraduate student performance data:

1) indicate the extent to which each type is collected
2) each type of data collected, check whether it is collected at entry, during enrollment, at exit, or a combination of these data collection points.

Type	Extent				Timing		
Currently Enrolled Students	Not Collected	Collected for some students	Collected for many students	Collected for all students	Collected at entry	Collected while enrolled	Collected at exit
	(circle one number for each item)				(check all that apply for each item)		
	1	2 AA	3 All	4			
1. Student academic intentions or expectations		**3.38**	3.25		___	___	___
2. Basic college-readiness skills (reading, writing, mathematics, etc.)		**3.56**	3.44		___	___	___
3. Higher-order skills (critical thinking, problem solving)		**1.88**	2.10		___	___	___
4. General education competencies		**2.41**	2.55		___	___	___
5. Competence in major field of study (discipline- or program-specific knowledge)		**2.30***	2.60		___	___	___
6. Vocational or professional skills		**2.25**	2.11		___	___	___
7. Personal growth and affective development (values, attitudes, social development, etc.)		**1.77***	2.12		___	___	___
8. Student experiences and involvement with institution		**2.35**	2.57		___	___	___
9. Student satisfaction with institution		**2.86**	2.96		___	___	___
10. Student academic progress (retention, graduation rates)		**3.58**	3.76				
Former Students							
11. Vocational or professional outcomes (career goals, job attainment or performance)		**2.73**	2.72				
12. Further education (transfer, degree attainment, graduate study)		**2.71**	2.69				
13. Civic or social roles (political, social or community involvement)		**1.37***	1.80				
14. Satisfaction and experiences with institution after leaving		**2.57**	2.63				

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B. Student Assessment Instruments

Does your institution employ institutionally or externally developed instruments or tests for the following types of undergraduate student assessment information? (circle all that apply for each item):

Content of Instrument	Not used 1	Source of Instrument: Institutionally developed 2	State provided 3	Commercially available 4
1. Student plans, goals, or expectations	**AA: 18%**	**60%**	**8%**	**24%**
	All: 21%	51%	4%	32%
2. Basic college-readiness skills (reading, writing, mathematics, etc.)	**AA: 1%**	**21%***	**14%**	**85%***
	All: 6%	38%	11%	67%
3. Higher-order skills (critical thinking, problem solving)	**AA: 51%**	**26%**	**2%**	**27%**
	All: 42%	29%	2%	32%
4. General education competencies	**AA: 35%**	**38%**	**5%**	**33%**
	All: 32%	40%	5%	33%
5. Competence in major field of study (discipline- or program-specific knowledge)	**AA: 30%***	**55%**	**14%**	**26%***
	All: 19%	64%	12%	39%
6. Vocational or professional skills (excluding licensure exams)	**AA: 29%**	**50%**	**14%**	**25%**
	All: 34%	43%	14%	25%
7. Personal growth and affective development (values, attitudes, social development, etc.)	**AA: 54%***	**29%***	**2%**	**21%**
	All: 38%	39%	2%	30%
8. Student effort, experiences or involvement with institution	**AA: 29%**	**57%**	**5%**	**17%**
	All: 21%	60%	4%	24%
9. Student satisfaction with institution	**AA: 4%**	**75%**	**12%**	**28%**
	All: 4%	73%	8%	35%
10. Alumni satisfaction and experiences	**AA: 16%**	**73%**	**12%**	**9%**
	All: 10%	78%	8%	15%

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C. Other Student Assessment Methods

To what extent does your institution use the following methods to collect undergraduate student assessment information? (circle one number for each item):

Other Student Assessment Methods	Not used 1	Used in some units* 2	Used in most units 3	Used in all units 4
		AA	All	
1. Observations of student performance (simulations, demonstrations, lab)		**2.22**	2.26	
2. Student portfolios or comprehensive projects		**1.95**	2.10	
3. Student performance in capstone courses		**1.78***	2.15	
4. Student interviews or focus groups		**1.65**	1.84	
5. Transcript analysis		**2.19**	2.16	
6. External examination of students (licensure exams, external reviewers)		**2.01**	2.02	
7. Special surveys of or interviews with withdrawing students		**2.26**	2.40	
8. Alumni interviews or focus groups		**1.80**	1.90	
9. Employer interviews or focus groups		**1.98**	1.87	

D. Student Sub-Populations

Does your institution use different assessment methods for the following sub-populations of undergraduate students? (check one for each item):

		Different		Same as Other Students
		AA	All	
1.	Adult students	**3%**	10%	_____
2.	Part-time students	**3%**	5%	_____
3.	Minority students	**2%**	2%	_____
4.	Distance education students	**21%**	22%	_____

* "Unit" refers to academic areas such as departments, divisions, schools, or colleges.

E. Student Assessment Studies

Does your institution conduct studies of the *relationship between* the following experiences and students' performance (check all that apply):

	AA	All
1. Student course-taking patterns	26%	26%
2. Exposure to different instructional or teaching methods	25%	21%
3. Patterns of student-faculty interaction	11%	14%
4. Extra-curricular activities	15%	24%
5. Residence arrangements	6%*	21%
6. Student financial aid and/or concurrent employment	27%	30%
7. Admission standards or policies	27%*	42%
8. Academic advising patterns	24%	26%
9. Classroom, library and/or computing resources	19%	17%
10. Do not study the relationship between the above experiences and student performance	45%	38%

F. Student Performance Profiles or Reports

Does your institution provide profiles or reports of appropriate student performance information at the following levels of aggregation (check all that apply):

	AA	All
1. Institution wide	66%	69%
2. Schools or colleges	13%*	31%
3. Academic programs or departments	61%	65%
4. Special populations or subgroups/students	46%	46%
5. By course or groups of courses	46%*	36%
6. Do not provide any reports	13%	11%

II. Institutional Support for Student Assessment

A. Institutional Emphasis

1. Your institutional mission statement explicitly (check all that apply):

	AA	All
a. emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education as an institutional priority	75%	82%
b. identifies the educational outcomes intended for your students	50%	52%
c. refers to student assessment as an important institutional activity	21%	19%
d. does not explicitly mention any of the above	14%	11%

2. For how many years has your institution engaged in student assessment? _____

B. Purpose of Student Assessment

The following are often intended purposes of an institution's undergraduate student assessment process. Please rate the importance of each for your institution. (circle one number for each item):

Purpose	No Importance 1	Minor Importance 2	Moderate Importance 3	Very Important 4
		AA	All	
1. Preparing institutional self-study for accreditation		**3.61**	3.86	
2. Meeting state reporting requirements		**3.37***	2.89	
3. Guiding internal resource allocation decisions		**2.83**	2.71	
4. Guiding undergraduate academic program improvement		**3.38**	3.43	
5. Improving the achievement of undergraduate students		**3.50**	3.48	
6. Improving faculty instructional performance		**3.06**	3.02	
7. Other (briefly describe): _____				

C. Administrative and Governance Activities

Institutions have introduced a variety of administrative or governance activities that address or promote student assessment. Does your institution engage in any of the following activities? (check all that apply):

		AA	All
1.	Annual presidential or other institution-wide initiatives, forums or seminars on assessment	**48%**	41%
2.	Rewards or incentives for academic and student affairs administrators who promote use of student assessment in their unit	**4%**	6%
3.	Incentives for academic units to use student assessment information in their evaluation and improvement efforts	**24%**	27%
4.	Student assessment workshops for academic and student affairs administrators	**57%**	56%
5.	Board of trustees committee that addresses student assessment	**10%**	13%
6.	Faculty governance committee that addresses student assessment issues	**50%**	58%
7.	Student representation on student assessment committees	**28%**	33%

D. Support for Student Assessment

Use the scale below to rate the degree to which various groups within your institution support undergraduate student assessment activities (circle one number for each item):

	Very Unsupportive 1	Somewhat Unsupportive 2	Neutral, Unknown 3	Supportive 4	Very Supportive 5
		AA	ALL		
1. Board of trustees		**3.87**	3.84		
2. Chief executive officer		**4.47**	4.41		
3. Academic affairs administrators		**4.64**	4.64		
4. Student affairs administrators		**4.38**	4.33		
5. Faculty governance		**3.87**	3.80		
6. Students		**3.40**	3.33		

E. Planning and Coordinating Student Assessment

1. Which of the following best describes your institution's *plan or policy* for undergraduate student assessment? Your institution (check all that apply):

	AA	All
a. has a formally adopted institutional plan or policy requiring specified undergraduate student assessment activities of all academic units or programs	**54%**	50%
b. has a formally adopted plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment in some academic units or program areas (e.g. general education or academic majors)	**20%**	19%
c. has a formally adopted institutional plan or policy requiring all academic units or programs to develop their own undergraduate student assessment plan	**24%***	39%
d. has a formally adopted institutional plan or policy stipulating institution-wide activities to be conducted by a central committee, office, or officer	**38%**	38%
e. has no formal plan or policy but academic units or programs are encouraged to conduct their own undergraduate student assessment activities	**10%**	13%
f. is currently developing a plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment	**14%**	17%
g. does not have an undergraduate student assessment plan or policy (SKIP TO E-6)	**4%**	4%

2. Is there an *institution-wide group* (committee, task force, etc.) that is primarily responsible for *ongoing planning and policy setting* for undergraduate student assessment? (check one):

		AA	All
a.	yes	**73%**	70%
b.	no (SKIP TO QUESTION E-5)		

3. If yes, who serves on this group? (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	Chief executive officer	**17%**	13%
b.	Academic affairs administrator(s)/staff	**86%**	86%
c.	Student affairs administrator(s)/staff	**67%***	54%
d.	Institutional research administrator(s)/staff	**67%**	61%
e.	Academic review and evaluation administrator(s)/staff	**24%**	24%
f.	Student assessment administrator(s)/staff	**37%**	32%
g.	Faculty	**91%**	91%
h.	Students	**28%**	33%
i.	Other _____	**13%**	12%

4. Who has *executive responsibility* for or who *chairs* the institution-wide group responsible for the ongoing planning or policy-setting process for undergraduate student assessment? (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	Academic affairs administrator	**54%**	55%
b.	Student affairs administrator	**13%**	7%
c.	Institutional research officer	**18%**	18%
d.	Academic review and evaluation officer	**3%**	5%
e.	Student assessment officer (if separate)	**8%**	8%
f.	Faculty member	**30%**	31%
g.	Other _____	**12%**	11%

5. Who *approves* any changes in your institution's plan or policies for undergraduate student assessment? (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	Board of trustees	**24%**	17%
b.	Chief executive officer	**57%***	45%
c.	Chief academic affairs officer	**72%**	75%
d.	Chief student affairs officer	**28%**	20%
e.	Institutional research officer	**20%**	18%
f.	Academic review and evaluation officer	**7%**	8%
g.	Student assessment officer	**12%**	10%
j.	Student government	**0.4%**	1%
h.	Academic senate or other faculty committee(s)	**30%**	39%
i.	Faculty union	**3%**	4%
k.	Other _____	**16%**	14%

6. Who has *operational* responsibility for your institution's day-to-day undergraduate student assessment activities (e.g., instrument development, data collection, analysis, and reporting)? (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	Academic affairs administrator	42%	45%
b.	Student affairs administrator	24%	20%
c.	Institutional research officer	49%	45%
d.	Academic review and evaluation officer	6%	9%
e.	Student assessment officer	18%	15%
f.	Faculty member(s)	27%	33%
g.	Other _____	11%	13%
h.	No one (SKIP TO QUESTION E8)	4%	3%

7. To whom does the individual with operational responsibility for day-to-day student assessment activities directly report? (check one):

		AA	All
a.	Chief executive officer	37%	29%
b.	Chief academic officer	43%*	56%
c.	Chief student affairs officer	13%	7%
d.	Institutional research officer	2%	3%
e.	Academic review and evaluation officer	1%	2%
f.	Other _____	11%	10%

8. Is there an office which provides faculty consultation in using student assessment for instructional improvement or curriculum development? (check one):

		AA	All
a.	yes	47%	47%
b.	no	53%	53%

9. If yes, what is the name of the office?_____

F. Evaluating Your Institution's Student Assessment Plan or Process

1. Has your institution evaluated its undergraduate student assessment process? (check one):

		AA	All
a.	yes, with a formal evaluation	26%	22%
b.	yes, with an informal evaluation	26%	27%
c.	currently developing evaluation plans (SKIP TO SECTION III)	28%	29%
d.	not currently evaluating or planning to evaluate assessment process (SKIP TO SECTION	20%	21%

2. In evaluating your institution's student assessment process, which of the following elements of that process were reviewed? (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	your student assessment plan and policies	79%	81%
b.	the structure and responsibility for student assessment	61%	64%
c.	achievement of your institution's intended objectives for student assessment	71%	70%
d.	reliability and validity of student assessment instruments and methods	58%	54%
e.	quality of data analysis	49%	51%
f.	use of student assessment information in institutional decision-making	69%	66%
g.	the problems encountered while conducting student assessment activities	67%	69%
h.	comparison of the costs and benefits of student assessment	23%	22%

III. External Influences on Institutional Student Assessment Activities

A. State Role (FOR STATE-FUNDED INSTITUTIONS ONLY; ALL OTHERS SKIP TO QUESTION III. B-1)

1. Was your state's plan/requirement for student assessment primarily developed (check one)):

		AA	All
a.	by state-level officials	17%	16%
b.	through joint consultation between state officials and institutional representatives	45%	39%
c.	no statewide plan or requirement for student assessment exists (SKIP TO III. B-1)	38%	46%

2. State requirements for student assessment (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	were an important reason for your institution to initiate undergraduate student assessment	48%	45%
b.	have increased your institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment	69%	62%
c.	have not been a factor in your institution's undergraduate student assessment activities	15%	22%
d.	have been a negative influence on your institution's undergraduate student assessment activities	4%	4%

3. Your state's reporting requirements include (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	evidence that a student assessment plan is in place	**69%**	68%
b.	measurement of state-mandated student performance indicators	**66%**	64%
c.	institutionally-devised student performance indicators	**48%**	49%
d.	evidence of institutional use of student assessment information	**53%**	52%

4. How has your state higher education agency reviewed or evaluated your institution's undergraduate student assessment plan or process after it was implemented? (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	reviewed by state officials	**46%**	42%
b.	reviewed using external reviewers	**20%**	16%
c.	required an institutional self-review	**28%**	24%
d.	no post hoc review has occurred (SKIP TO QUESTION B-1)	**36%**	44%

5. The state review of your institution's undergraduate student assessment plan or process included (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	review of your institution's student assessment process itself	**48%***	67%
b.	comparison of your institution's student performance record with your past performance	**41%**	44%
c.	comparison of your institution's student performance record with peer institutions	**38%**	36%
d.	comparison of your institution's student performance record with institutions in your state	**36%**	38%
e.	other (briefly describe) _____	**10%**	10%

B. Regional Accrediting Role in Student Assessment

1. Has your institution gone through a regional self study accreditation review which required undergraduate student assessment? (check one):

		AA	All
a.	yes	**80%**	80%
b.	no	**20%**	29%

2. Regional accreditation agency requirements for undergraduate student assessment (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	were an important reason for your institution to initiate undergraduate student assessment	**62%**	64%
b.	have increased your institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment	**75%**	79%
c.	have not been a factor in your institution's undergraduate student assessment activities	**15%**	12%
d.	have had a negative influence on your institution's undergraduate std. assessment activities	**0.8%**	0.9%

3. Your institution's regional accreditation agency requires (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	evidence that a student assessment plan or process is in place	**89%**	90%
b.	intended institutional uses of student assessment information	**72%**	73%
c.	results of student assessment	**66%**	66%
d.	evidence of actual institutional use of student assessment information	**78%**	77%
e.	unfamiliar with regional accreditation requirements for student assessment	**4%**	5%

C. External Sources of Support for Assessment

1. Has your institution received external grants to improve undergraduate student assessment practices from any of the following? (check all that apply):

		AA	All
a.	FIPSE	**2%**	6%
b.	other federal agencies (please identify): _____	**10%**	7%
c.	a state incentive program	**8%**	7%
d.	private foundations or corporate sources (please identify): _____	**2%**	6%
e.	no known external grants received	**81%**	79%

2. Has your institution used any of the following student assessment services offered by the following postsecondary organizations? (check all services that apply for each type of organization):

	Student Assessment Service Used				
Type of Postsecondary Organization	Not used or not available	Consultation services	Assessment conferences	Training workshops	Publications or research reports
a. Professional associations (Institutional, disciplinary, or administrative)	**AA: 35%**	**11%**	**43%**	**30%**	**46%**
	All: 29%	13%	51%	32%	51%
b. Regional accrediting association	**AA: 35%**	**20%**	**39%**	**29%**	**41%**
	All: 30%	19%	41%	32%	45%
c. State-level agency	**AA:42%***	**19%**	**33%**	**31%**	**26%**
	All: 54%	14%	26%	22%	22%
d. Consortium of institutions	**AA: 56%**	**12%**	**25%**	**20%**	**16%**
	All: 53%	13%	30%	18%	20%

IV. Academic Management Policies and Practices for Student Assessment

Institutions have a wide array of formally organized policies, activities, and procedures intended to enhance or support the collection and use of undergraduate student assessment information. The following policies and practices have been identified in many institutions.

FOR QUESTIONS A THROUGH D, INDICATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING POLICIES OR PRACTICES EXIST AT YOUR INSTITUTION.

A. Resource Allocation for Student Assessment (check all that apply):

	AA	All
1. An explicit operating budget allocation is made to support student assessment.	47%	49%
2. An academic budget process that considers student performance indicators in resource allocation to academic units.	26%	23%
3. An academic budget process that compares academic units on student performance indicators and allocates resources competitively.	2%	2%
4. An academic budget process that rewards academic units for improvement based on their own past student performance indicators.	3%	3%

B. Student Assessment Information System (check all that apply):

	AA	All
1. Key student assessment activities have been scheduled into the academic calendar.	58%	57%
2. A computerized student information system which includes student performance indicators.	34%	28%
3. Student information system tracks individual students from application through graduation.	41%	42%
4. Student assessment database integrated with faculty, curricular, and financial databases.	14%	10%

C. Access to Individual Student Assessment Information (check all that apply):

Student assessment information on individual students is available to:

	AA	All
1. Institutional research, assessment or evaluation professionals	83%	76%
2. Senior academic administrators	77%	72%
3. Department chairs or academic program administrators	78%	73%
4. Student affairs professionals	70%*	58%
5. Faculty advisors	71%	66%

D. Distribution of Student Assessment Reports and Studies (check all that apply):

Student assessment reports and studies or appropriate summaries are regularly distributed to:

	AA	All
1. Students	19%	19%
2. Faculty	69%	67%
3. Academic administrators	84%	86%
4. Student affairs professionals	67%	58%
5. Employers	7%	5%
6. The general public	9%	8%

FOR QUESTIONS E THROUGH H, USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE TO INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING POLICIES AND PRACTICES EXIST AT YOUR INSTITUTION (Circle one number for each item).

E. Student Policies on Student Assessment	Not done at all 1	Done in a few depts. 2	Done in some depts. 3	Done in many depts. 4	Done in most depts. 5
		AA		All	
1. Students are required to participate in student assessment activities		3.81		3.77	
2. Incentives are provided to encourage students to participate in student assessment activities		1.72		1.87	
3. Information regarding the purpose and uses of student assessment is provided to students		3.49		3.52	
4. Students are provided with individual feedback regarding their own student performance results		3.38		3.21	

F. Professional Development					
		AA		All	
1. Faculty are required to learn about or receive training on student assessment		2.76		2.47	
2. Funds for faculty to attend or present at professional conferences on student assessment are available		3.41*		3.08	
3. Workshops, seminars, or consultative services for faculty on the use of student assessment in course design or instruction are offered		3.09		2.90	
4. Assistance for faculty in the form of paid leaves, stipends, mini grants or course reduction to improve use of student assessment is provided		2.12		2.00	
5. Workshops and seminars for department chairs, deans, and other academic administrators to improve use of student assessment in their unit is provided		2.76		2.55	
6. Student affairs staff are required to learn about or receive training related to student assessment		2.51		2.22	
7. Student assessment workshops for student affairs administrators are provided		2.54*		2.22	

G. Faculty Evaluation and Rewards

	AA	All
1. Faculty evaluation for promotion considers evidence of student performance in their classes (not just student teaching evaluation)	1.69	1.84
2. Faculty evaluation for annual salary and merit increases incorporates evidence of student performance	1.41	1.56
3. Faculty scholarship on or innovative uses of student assessment is considered in promotion, tenure, or salary reviews	1.74	2.01
4. Faculty willingness to use or to participate in student assessment activities is considered in faculty promotion, tenure, or salary reviews	1.85	1.99
5. Faculty receive public recognition or awards for innovative or effective use of student assessment	1.62	1.58
6. Faculty hiring process considers experience or skill in student assessment	1.84	1.68
7. Faculty are encouraged to assess student learning in their classes	4.18	3.99

H. Academic Planning and Review	Not done at all 1	Done in a few depts. 2	Done in some depts. 3	Done in many depts. 4	Done in most depts. 5
Your institution incorporates student performance data into the following processes:					
		AA		All	
1. Academic department or undergraduate program planning or review		**3.65**		3.67	
2. General education or core curriculum review		**3.61**		3.55	
3. Course-level review and development		**3.57**		3.36	
4. Review and planning for student academic support services		**3.22**		3.09	

V. Impacts of Student Assessment

A. Decision Making

To what extent has the use of information available from your undergraduate student assessment process influenced the following actions? (circle one number for each item):

Institutional Actions	No action or influence unknown 1	Action taken, data not influential 2	Action taken, data somewhat influential 3	Action taken, data very influential 4
		AA	All	
1. Revising your undergraduate academic mission or goals		**2.06**	2.06	
2. Designing or reorganizing academic programs or majors		**2.46**	2.54	
3. Designing or reorganizing student affairs units		**1.88**	1.91	
4. Allocating resources to academic units		**1.88**	1.81	
5. Modifying student assessment plans, policies, or processes		**2.70**	2.61	
6. Deciding faculty promotion and tenure		**1.36**	1.46	
7. Deciding faculty salary increases or rewards (release time, travel funds, etc.)		**1.30**	1.39	
8. Revising or modifying general education curriculum		**2.39**	2.47	
9. Creating or modifying student out- of-class learning experiences (e.g. internships, service learning)		**2.00**	2.14	
10. Creating or modifying distance learning initiatives		**1.88**	1.72	
11. Modifying instructional or teaching methods		**2.51**	2.47	
12. Modifying student academic support services (e.g. advising, tutoring)		**2.56**	2.56	

B. Institutional Impacts

Have you monitored the following institutional indicators and been able to document the impact of student assessment information on them? (circle one number for each item):

Internal Impacts	Not monitored, do not know 1	Monitored, negative impact 2	Monitored, no known impact 3	Monitored, positive impact 4
		AA	All	
1. Affected campus discussions of undergraduate education		**2.12**	2.28	
2. Contributed to faculty satisfaction		**1.71**	1.69	
3. Contributed to faculty interest in teaching		**1.86**	1.88	
4. Led to changes in instructional or teaching methods used		**2.41**	2.45	
5. Contributed to student satisfaction		**1.99**	2.03	
6. Affected student retention or graduation rates		**2.24**	2.20	
7. Affected student grade performance		**2.08**	1.95	
8. Affected student achievement on external examinations (e.g. professional licensure, GRE)		**2.01**	1.97	
External Impacts				
		AA	All	
9. Affected student applications or student acceptance rates		**1.40**	1.48	
10. Affected allocation or share of state funding		**1.55**	1.46	
11. Affected evaluation from regional accreditation agency		**2.47**	2.55	
12. Affected private fund-raising results		**1.28**	1.42	
13. Affected success on grant applications		**1.69**	1.65	
14. Affected communication with external constituents		**1.65**	1.75	
15. Affected institutional reputation or image		**1.91**	1.94	

Note: * denotes difference greater than or equal to .3 or 10% from average of all institutions.

VI. Further Studies - Optional

This page will be removed from the questionnaire before it is processed and completion of it is optional. However, we would like to know more about your institution's experience with student assessment and we would like to be able to respond to you personally with a follow up report.

Within the next year several institutions will be invited to participate in a more intensive study of the impacts of their student assessment practices and policies. Would you be interested in participating in a case study?

__ yes
__ possibly
__ no

If you are interested, we would appreciate any additional information regarding your student assessment practices that you believe would be of interest to other institutions. If you believe your approach to student assessment or its impacts are unusual, please describe it briefly (or enclose a report you think captures your experience).

_____

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Please provide your name and address if you are interested in receiving a personal summary report of this survey.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Institution: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this instrument.

Appendix B

Construction and Content of Variables

Variable	Definition
Institutional Characteristics	
Enrollment	Single item. Reflects number of students enrolled in institution. Data from 1995 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
Control	Single item. (1 = public; 0 = private). Data from IPEDS.
Institutional type	Four dummy-coded single items. Reflects the institution's Carnegie type. (Associate of Arts, Baccalaureate, Doctoral, and Research. Master's institutions was the omitted category.) Data from IPEDS.
External Influences on Student Assessment	
State initiative	Single item. Reflects whether the state's assessment initiatives were guided by legislative or other means (1 = no state plan; 2 = state policy; 3 = state statute; 4 = combination of policy & statute). Data from SAS.
State approach	Single item. Reflects whether states mandate common indicators and outcomes (1 = no indicators or outcomes; 2 = institutional specific; 3 = common for some; 4 = common for all). Data from SAS.
Accrediting association	Five dummy-coded single items. Reflects the institution's regional accreditation association membership (Middle States; North Central; New England; Southern; Western. Northwest region was the omitted region). Data from IPEDS.
Development of state plan	Single item. (III A 1) Reflects how state plan for student assessment was primarily developed (1 = state; 2 = joint consultation between state and institution; 3 = no state plan or requirement).
State influence	Four single items. (III A 2 a-d) Reflect the influence of state requirements on the institutions assessment activities: a = important reason to initiate student assessment; b = increased institution's involvement in assessment; c = have not been a factor in assessment activities; d = have been negative influence on assessment activities (1 = yes; 0 = no).
State reporting requirements	Four single items. (III A 3 a-d) Reflect the state's reporting requirements: a = evidence that assessment plan is in place; b = measurement of state mandated indicators; c = use of institutionally devised indicators; d = evidence of institutional use of assessment information (1 = yes; 0 = no).
State review methods	Four single items. (III A 4 a-d) Reflect the method used by state to review the institutions assessment activities: a = reviewed by state officials; b = reviewed using external reviewers; c = required institutional self-review; d = no review occurred (1 = yes; 0 = no).
State review criteria	Five single items. (III A 5 a-e) Reflect the processes included in the state review of the institutions assessment activities: a = review of institutions process itself; b = compare student performance record with past record; c = compare student performance record with peer institutions; d = compare student performance record with other in state; e = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).

Variable	Definition
Accrediting influence	Four single items. (III B 2 a-d) Reflect the influence of regional accreditation agency requirements on the institutions assessment activities: a = important reason to initiate student assessment; b = increased institution's involvement in assessment; c = have not been a factor in assessment activities; d = have been negative influence on assessment activities (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Accrediting reporting requirements	Five single items. (III B 3 a-e) Reflect the regional accreditation agency reporting requirements: a = evidence that assessment plan is in place; b = intended uses of assessment information; c = results of assessment; d = evidence of actual institutional use of assessment information; e = unfamiliar with regional accreditation requirements (1 = yes; 0 = no).
External sources of support	Five single items. (III C 1 a-e) Reflect the sources of support received to improve student assessment practices: a = FIPSE; b = other federal agencies; c = state incentive program; d = private foundation or corporate source; e = no known external grants (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Use of external services	Four single items. (III C 2 a-d) Reflect the use of services offered by each of the following type of postsecondary organization: a = professional associations; b = regional accrediting association; c = state-level agency; d = consortium of institutions. Respondents could choose from the following services offered by each organization: organization not used or not available; consultation services; assessment conferences; training workshops; publications or research reports (1 = used; 0 = not used).
Institutional Approach to Student Assessment	
Academic intentions	Single item. (I A 1) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on current student's academic intentions or expectations (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).
Basic college-readiness skills	Single item. (I A 2) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on current student's college-readiness skills (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).
Cognitive assessment	Four item factorially-derived scale. (I A 3-6) Reflects the extent to which institutions collect data on current students' cognitive performance: competence in major field; general education competencies; higher-order cognitive skills; vocational or professional skills (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students). Cronbach alpha = .71.
Affective assessment	Three item factorially-derived scale. (I A 7-9) Reflects the extent to which institutions collect data on current students' affective development and satisfaction: experiences and involvement with institution; satisfaction with institution; personal growth and affective development (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students). Cronbach alpha = .68.
Academic progress	Single item. (I A 10) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on current student's academic progress (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).

Variable	Definition
Post-college assessment	Three item factorially-derived scale. (I A 11,12,14) Reflects the extent to which institutions collect data from former students: vocational or professional outcomes; further education; satisfaction and experiences with institution after leaving (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students). Cronbach alpha = .83.
Civic/social roles	Single item. (I A 13) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on former student's civic or social roles in the community (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).
Timing of data collection	Nine item additive index. (I A 1-9) Reflects when institutions collect data (1 = not collected; 2 = collected at one point in time; 3 = collected at entry and while enrolled, or while enrolled and at exit; 4 = collected at entry and at exit; 5 = collected at entry, while enrolled, and at exit).
Number of instruments	Nine item additive index. (I B 1-9) Reflects student assessment instruments (institutionally developed, state provided, and commercially available) used by institution to collect ten types of assessment information: student plans or expectations; basic college-readiness skills; higher-order cognitive skills; general education competencies; competence in major; vocational or professional skills; personal growth and affective development; experiences or involvement with institution; satisfaction with institution (1 = instrument used; 0 = instrument not used).
Student-centered methods	Four item factorially-derived scale. (I C 1-4) Reflects the extent to which institutions use innovative or nontraditional assessment methods: performance in capstone courses; portfolios or comprehensive projects; observations of student performance; individual interviews or focus groups (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units). Cronbach alpha = .61.
External methods	Two item factorially-derived scale. (I C 8-9) Reflects the extent to which institutions use assessment methods that data from external constituencies: employer interviews or focus groups; alumni interviews or focus groups (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units). Cronbach alpha = .63.
Transcript analysis	Single item. (I C 5) Reflects extent to which institutions use transcript analysis to collect student assessment information (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units).
External examination	Single item. (I C 6) Reflects extent to which institutions use external examinations to collect student assessment information (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units).
Interviews of withdrawing students	Single item. (I C 7) Reflects extent to which institutions use interviews with withdrawing students to collect student assessment information (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units).

Variable	Definition
Student sub-populations	Four single items. (I D 1-4) Reflect the use of different assessment methods for the following different student populations: a = adult students; b = part-time students; c = minority students; d = distance education students (1 = different method; 2 = same method).
Number of studies	Nine item additive index. (I E 1-9) Reflects the number of studies institutions conduct on the relationship between aspects of students' institutional experiences and performance: course-taking patterns; exposure to different teaching methods; patterns of student-faculty interaction; extra-curricular activities; residence arrangements; financial aid and/or employment; admission standards or policies; academic advising patterns; classroom, library and/or computing resources (1 = conduct study; 0 = do not conduct study).
Number of reports	Five item additive index. (I F 1-5) Reflects the levels of aggregation at which student assessment data are provided as reports: institution-wide; schools or colleges; academic programs or departments; special populations or subgroups of students; by course or groups of courses (1 = report provided; 0 = report not provided).
Organizational and Administrative Support Patterns	
Mission emphasis	Three item additive index. (II A 1 a-c) Reflects institutions' mission statement emphasis on undergraduate education and its assessment: emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education; identifies educational outcomes intended for students; refers to student assessment as important activity (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Internal purposes	Four item factorially-derived score. (II B 3-6) Reflects the importance of internal institutional purposes for undertaking student assessment: guiding undergraduate academic program improvement; improving achievement of undergraduate students; improving faculty instructional performance; guiding resource allocation decisions (1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance; 4 = very important). Cronbach alpha = .79.
Accreditation purposes	Single item. (II B 1) Reflects importance of preparing for institutional accreditation self-study as a purpose for undertaking student assessment (1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance; 4 = very important).
State purposes	Single item. (II B 2) Reflects importance of meeting state reporting requirements as a purpose for undertaking student assessment (1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance; 4 = very important).
Administrative and governance activities	Seven item additive index. (II C 1-7) Reflects the number of administrative or governance activities used by institutions to promote student assessment: annual institution-wide assessment forums or seminars; rewards or incentives for administrators promoting use of assessment in unit; incentives for academic units to use assessment information; assessment workshops for administrators; board of trustees committee addresses assessment; faculty governance committee addresses assessment; student representation on assessment committees (1 = yes; 0 = no).

Variable	Definition
Administrative and faculty support	Four item additive index. (II D 2-5) Reflects the degree to which chief executive officer, academic and student affairs administrators, and faculty support student assessment (1 = very unsupportive; 2 = somewhat unsupportive; 3 = neutral or unknown; 4 = somewhat supportive; 5 = very supportive).
Type of plan or policy	Seven single items. (II E 1 a-g) Reflects the institutions plan or policy for student assessment: a = formally adopted plan or policy requiring assessment activities for all academic units; b = formally adopted plan or policy requiring assessment activities for some academic units; c = formally adopted plan or policy requiring all academic units to develop their own assessment plan; d = formally adopted plan or policy stipulating institution-wide activities to be conducted by central committee, office, or officer; e = has no formal plan or policy but academic units are encouraged to conduct their own assessment activities; f = is currently developing plan or policy; g = does not have an assessment plan or policy (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Formal centralized policy	Single item. (II E 1 a) Reflects institution has formal institutional plan or policy requiring specified student assessment activities of all academic units or programs (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Institution-wide planning group	Single item. (II E 2) Reflects institution has institution-wide group for student assessment planning and policy setting (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Breadth of assessment planning group	Nine item additive index. (II E 3 a-i) Reflects the number of internal members included in the institution's assessment planning group: chief executive officer; academic affairs administrator(s)/staff; student affairs administrator(s)/staff; institutional research administrator(s)/staff; academic review and evaluation administrator(s) /staff; student assessment administrator(s)/staff; faculty; students; other.
Responsibility for planning group	Seven single items. (II E 4 a-g) Reflect the internal members who have executive responsibility for the institution-wide group responsible for planning or policy-setting for assessment: a = academic affairs administrator; b = student affairs administrator; c = institutional research officer; d = academic review and evaluation officer; e = student assessment officer; f = faculty member; g = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Approval authority	Eleven single items. (II E 5 a-k) Reflect the internal members who approve any changes to institutions assessment plan or policy: a = board of trustees; b = chief executive officer; c = chief academic affairs officer; d = chief student affairs officer; e = institutional research officer; f = academic review and evaluation officer; g = student assessment officer; h = student government; i = academic senate or other faculty committees; j = faculty union; k = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Operating responsibility	Eight single items. (II E 6 a-h) Reflect the internal members who have operational responsibility for the institution's day-to-day assessment activities: a = academic affairs administrator; b = student affairs administrator; c = institutional research officer; d = academic review and evaluation officer; e = student assessment officer; f = faculty member; g = other; h = no one (1 = yes; 0 = no).

Variable	Definition
Reporting relationship	Six single items. (II E 7 a-f) Reflect the individual to whom person with day-to-day responsibility reports: a = chief executive officer; b = chief academic affairs officer; c = chief student affairs officer; d = institutional research officer; e = academic review and evaluation officer; f = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Conducted evaluation	Single item. (II F 1 a-d) Reflects if institution has formally or informally evaluated its student assessment process (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Evaluations elements	Eight single items. (II F 2 a-h) Reflect the elements that were reviewed during the institutions assessment evaluation: a = student assessment plan or policies; b = structure and responsibility for assessment; c = achievement of intended objectives; d = reliability and validity of instruments and methods; e = quality of data analysis; f = use of information in institutional decision-making; g = problems encountered; h = comparison of costs and benefits (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Assessment Management Policies and Practices	
Budget decisions	Two item additive index. (IV A 3-4) Reflects formal use of assessment information in the budget process: to competitively allocate resources among academic units; to reward academic units for improvement (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Computer support	Three item additive index. (IV B 2-4) Reflects institutional capacity to collect and manage student assessment information: computerized student information system includes student performance indicators; student information system tracks individual students; student assessment database integrated with other institutional databases (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Access to information	Five item additive index. (IV C 1-5) Reflects internal accessibility of assessment information on individual students by: institutional research or assessment professionals; senior academic administrators; department chairs or academic program administrators; student affairs professionals; faculty advisors (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Distribution of reports	Six item additive index. (IV D 1-6) Reflects the number of constituent groups to whom student assessment reports are regularly distributed: students; faculty; academic administrators; student affairs professionals; employers; general public (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Student involvement	Three item factorially-derived scale. (IV E 1,3,4) Reflects the extent to which institutions have policies or practices to promote student involvement in assessment activities: inform students about assessment purposes and uses; require students to participate in assessment activities; provide students with individual feedback on assessment results (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .69.

Variable	Definition
Professional development	Four item factorially-derived scale. (IV F 2-5) Reflects existence of professional development policies or practices on student assessment for faculty and academic administrators: provide funds for faculty to attend or present at assessment conferences; offer student assessment workshops or consultation for faculty; provide assistance (e.g., paid leaves, stipends, course reduction) to improve faculty use of student assessment; provide student assessment workshops for academic administrators (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .77.
Student affairs training	Two item factorially-derived scale. (IV F 6-7) Reflects existence of professional development policies or practices on student assessment for student affairs personnel: require assessment training for student affairs staff; provide student assessment workshops for student affairs administrators (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .84.
Faculty evaluation	Five item factorially-derived scale. (IV G 1-5) Reflects existence of faculty evaluation and reward policies and practices related to student assessment: promotion evaluation considers evidence of student performance; salary evaluation considers evidence of student performance; promotion, tenure or salary reviews consider faculty participation in student assessment; promotion, tenure or salary reviews consider scholarship on assessment; public recognition or awards for faculty use of student assessment (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .77.
Academic planning and review	Four item factorially-derived scale. (IV H 1-4) Reflects the incorporation of student assessment data into academic planning and review processes for: academic departments or undergraduate programs; general education or core curriculum; courses; student academic support services (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .84.
<u>Institutional Uses of Student Assessment</u>	
Educational decisions	Ten item factorially-derived scale. (V A 1-5, 8-12) Reflects the influence of student assessment information in educational decisions: revision of undergraduate academic mission or goals; designing or reorganizing academic programs or majors; designing or reorganizing student affairs units; allocating resources to academic units; modifying student assessment plans, policies, or processes; revising or modifying general education curriculum; creating or modifying student out-of-class learning experiences; creating or modifying distance learning initiatives; modifying instructional or teaching methods; modifying student academic support services (1 = no action or influence known; 2 = action taken, data not influential; 3 = action taken, data somewhat influential; 4 = action taken, data very influential), Cronbach alpha = .83.

Variable	Definition
Faculty decisions	Two item factorially-derived scale. (V A 6-7) Reflects the influence of student assessment information in faculty decisions: deciding faculty promotion and tenure; deciding faculty salary increases or rewards (1 = no action or influence known; 2 = action taken, data not influential; 3 = action taken, data somewhat influential; 4 = action taken, data very influential). Cronbach alpha = .79.
Institutional Impacts of Student Assessment	
Faculty impacts	Four item factorially-derived scale. (V B 1-4) Reflects student assessment impacts on faculty: affected campus discussions of undergraduate education; contributed to faculty satisfaction; contributed to faculty interest in teaching; led to changes in teaching methods used (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Cronbach alpha = .79.
Student impacts	Four item factorially-derived scale. (V B 5-8) Reflects student assessment impacts on students: contributed to student satisfaction; affected student retention or graduation rates; affected student grade performance; affected student achievement on external examinations (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Cronbach alpha = .82.
External impacts	Seven item factorially-derived scale. (V B 9-15) Reflects student assessment impacts on external constituents: affected student applications or acceptance rates; affected allocation or share of state funding; affected evaluation from regional accrediting agency; affected private fund-raising results; affected success on grant applications; affected communications with external constituents; affected institutional reputation or image (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Cronbach alpha = .82.

[1] Assessment of Teaching and Learning for Improvement and Public Accountability: State Governing, Coordinating Board and Regional Accreditation Association Policies and Practices (Cole et al., 1997)

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